Weekly Compilation of

Presidential Documents

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Editor's Note: The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on April 22, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, April 22, 2005

Proclamation 7887—National Park Week, 2005

April 15, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's system of national parks is dedicated to protecting our resources and preserving our cultural and natural treasures. During National Park Week, we celebrate these places and those who work to support and maintain them. This year's National Park Week theme, "National Parks: America's Gift to the World," reminds us that our country's parks serve as tributes to our Nation's history that are enjoyed by visitors from around the globe.

My Administration is dedicated to ensuring that our national parks remain a source of pride for our citizens, and we are expanding our ability to protect America's historical and natural wonders. By insisting upon management excellence, the National Park Service is ensuring that the most vital maintenance and conservation needs of our parks are met and that resources are spent where they are needed the most.

As we observe National Park Week, we recognize the vital contributions of National Park Service employees and volunteers. These dedicated men and women manage nearly 400 areas, covering more than 84 million acres in 49 states. Together with the 140,000 volunteers who donated over 5 million hours to these sites last year, National Park Service employees ensure that our National Parks are safe and enjoyable places where visitors can experience America.

America's national parks reflect our commitment to protect the land that God has entrusted to our care and to mark the milestones that have made us a better Nation. In being good stewards of these treasures, we maintain the legacy of our country for future generations.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 18 through April 24, 2005, as National Park Week. I call upon the people of the United States to join me in recognizing the importance of our national parks and to learn more about these places of beauty, their cultural and historical significance, and the many ways citizens can volunteer to protect and conserve these precious national resources.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 19, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 20. This item was not received in time for inclusion in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

April 16, 2005

Good morning. American families and small businesses across the country are feeling the pinch from rising gas prices. If you're trying to meet a family budget or a payroll, even a small change at the pump can have a big impact.

America's prosperity depends on reliable, affordable, and secure sources of energy. And today, our energy needs are growing faster than our domestic sources are able to provide. Demand for electricity has grown more than 17 percent in the past decade while our transmission ability lags behind.

And we continue to import more than one-half of our domestic oil supply.

In the coming days and weeks, I'll talk more about what we need to do in Washington to make sure America has an energy policy that reflects the demands of a new century. The first order of business is for Congress to pass an energy bill. Next week Congress begins debate on energy legislation, and they need to send me a bill that meets four important objectives.

First, the energy bill must encourage the use of technology to improve conservation. We must find smarter ways to meet our energy needs, and we must encourage Americans to make better choices about energy consumption. We must also continue to invest in research, so we will develop the technologies that would allow us to conserve more and be better stewards of the environment.

Second, the energy bill must encourage more production at home in environmentally sensitive ways. Over the past 3 years, America's energy consumption has increased by about 4 percent, while our domestic energy production has decreased by about 1 percent. That means more of our energy is coming from abroad. To meet our energy needs and strengthen our national security, we must make America less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Third, the energy bill must diversify our energy supply by developing alternative sources of energy like ethanol or biodiesel. We need to promote safe, clean nuclear power. And to create more energy choices, Congress should provide tax credits for renewable power sources such as wind, solar, and landfill gas. We must also continue our clean-coal technology projects so that we can use the plentiful source of coal in an environmentally friendly way. The bill must also support pollution-free cars and trucks, powered by hydrogen fuel cells instead of gasoline.

Finally, the energy bill must help us find better, more reliable ways to deliver energy to consumers. In some parts of the country, our transmission lines and pipelines are decades older than the homes and businesses they supply. Many of them are increasingly vulnerable to events that can interrupt and shut down power in entire regions of the country. We must modernize our infrastructure to make America's energy more secure and reliable.

Every source of power that we use today started with the power of human invention, and those sources have served us well for decades. Now it's time to apply our knowledge and technology to keep the American Dream alive in this new century. There is nothing America cannot achieve when we put our mind to it. And I urge Congress to work out its differences and pass an energy bill that will help make America safer and more prosperous for the years to come.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:45 a.m. on April 15 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 15 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Strengthening Social Security in Columbia, South Carolina

April 18, 2005

Thank you all very much. Mr. Speaker, thank you for that kind and short introduction. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Governor Sanford being here. I want to thank the Lieutenant Governor. I appreciate President Pro Tem McConnell, Majority Leader Leatherman, members of the South Carolina legislature.

I appreciate my traveling party from Washington. Hope you appreciate them, too. That would be Senator Lindsey Graham, Senator DeMint, Members of the United States House of Representatives from the great State of South Carolina.

I appreciate the justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court being here. I thank those of you who have taken time to come and listen. I appreciate your warm welcome.

It is an honor to be speaking in this chamber. It is great to be back in the capital of South Carolina. The last time I came to this city, I gave the commencement speech at USC. I was proud to have received an honorary degree. When I told Laura about it,

she said, "I thought your first degree was honorary." [*Laughter*] She sends her best, and she sends her love. She's, by the way, a fabulous First Lady. She is—[*applause*].

I appreciate our escort committee. I told the Members that this is the first time I have spoken to a legislative body, State legislative body since I was the Governor of Texas. So thank you for having me. It's—there's some differences, of course. There are a lot of cowboy hats back in Austin. [*Laughter*] And I'll be honest with you, a lot of us didn't know anything about dancing the shag. [*Laughter*] And I imagine we could have a pretty good debate about which of our States has the best barbecue. [*Laughter*] Now is not the time. [*Laughter*]

But one thing is, no matter whether you serve at the Federal level or the State level, we share serious responsibilities. See, our constituents have put us into office to solve problems now. That's what they've done. They said, "We've elected you to go to your statehouse"—or in my case, Washington, DC—"to solve problems." The people expect us to confront problems without illusion. They expect us to lead with conviction and confidence, not by reading the latest poll or listening to the latest focus group, and above all, they expect us to deliver results.

And here in South Carolina, you've delivered results. You've faced serious challenges, especially in your economy. Listen, we've had a stock market decline. We've had a recession. We've had corporate scandals. We had a terrorist attack on September the 11th, 2001. We've had the demands of war. And all these have tested our Nation's economy, and they hit particularly hard here in your State. South Carolina's economic growth slowed. Small businesses moved out or shut down. Workers lost their jobs, and State finances were headed toward a free fall.

The people of South Carolina looked to you and they looked to your Governor for leadership. And you delivered. You set clear priorities for your budget, and you made hard decisions when it came to spending. To rein in the rising costs of health care, you became one of the first States in the Nation to offer health savings accounts to State employees. To reward hard-working families and job creators, you refused to raise taxes on the working people of South Carolina. You've focused bipartisan actions. You've lifted your State out of fiscal crisis. You've erased a $155 million deficit, and you've done it 2 years ahead of schedule. Today, South Carolina families are planning for the future with confidence.

I found this to be an interesting statistic about your State: More than 76 percent of the people in your State own their own home, one of the highest rates in the United States. Small businesses are investing and expanding. Exports are on the rise. Thanks to your leadership, thanks to your hard work, thanks to your willingness to set aside partisan differences, jobs are coming back to the great State of South Carolina.

In Washington, we're moving forward with an ambitious agenda to keep this country safe, prosperous, and free. The war on terror goes on. There are still ruthless enemies that would like to do harm to our people. We will continue to keep the pressure on these folks. We'll work with our friends and allies to be unrelenting in our search to bring them to justice. We will not rest until America is safe.

We'll continue to work to improve security here at home, but in the long term, in the long run, the best way to protect America and to keep the peace is to change the conditions that give rise to hopelessness and extremism. And the best way to do that is to spread freedom around the world. I don't believe freedom is America's gift to the world. I believe freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

And that is why the United States of America will stand strongly with people in Afghanistan to Iraq to Lebanon to the Ukraine, because we understand that as freedom advances, the American people will be more secure, and we'll be able to achieve the peace that we all want.

My administration will continue to pursue progrowth policies to ensure that America is the best place in the world to do business. To keep the economy growing and create jobs, we will keep the taxes low. We'll continue to confront the problems of junk lawsuits by pushing for meaningful asbestos and medical liability reform. We'll work with Congress to pass an energy bill that will make

America less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I sent to Congress a disciplined Federal budget, and both the House and the Senate have passed budget resolutions. And now they need to work out their differences and send me a budget that meets America's priorities, that restrains Federal spending, and that keeps us on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009. In Washington and in Columbia, South Carolina, government needs to follow a straightforward principle: A taxpayer's dollar must be spent wisely or not spent at all.

Strong leadership means rising to the challenges of the day. It also means looking down the road. There will always be problems that arise unexpectedly, yet problems—some problems are completely predictable. And as leaders, you and I have a responsibility to confront those problems today and not pass them on to future generations.

Over the past few weeks, I've been traveling around the country talking about one of the most serious and most predictable challenges which face our Nation, and that is the long-term fiscal health of Social Security. Social Security has been a great success. Franklin Roosevelt did a really smart thing in setting up the Social Security system. It has provided an important safety net for millions of Americans.

Seniors in South Carolina and seniors across this country depend on their monthly checks as an important part of their lives, as an important source of income for their retirement. And today I have a message for every senior in South Carolina and every senior across this country: Do not pay attention to the propaganda and scare ads. If you're receiving a Social Security check this month, you will continue receiving a Social Security next month and the month after that and every month for the rest of your life.

There are other Americans who are now approaching retirement and have been paying into Social Security throughout their lives. These workers are counting on Social Security as part of their retirement plans, and there's money in the system for them. If you were born prior to 1950, America will honor the promise of Social Security for you. The problem is that the Government is making promises for younger Americans that it cannot pay for. In other words, there's a hole in the safety net for younger Americans.

See, Social Security is a pay-as-you-go system. You pay, and we go ahead and spend here in Washington. [*Laughter*] We spend on—to provide benefits for current retirees, and with money left over, we have spent your payroll taxes on Government programs. Some people think there's a Social Security trust, where the Government is holding your money in an account with your name on it. It just doesn't work that way. That's not the way the system works. There is no vault holding your cash, waiting for you to retire. Instead, because we spend Social Security taxes on current retirees and other Government programs, all that is left over in the so-called security trust is a bunch of filing cabinets with IOUs in them.

As a matter of fact, I went to West Virginia the other day to look at the filing cabinets, to make sure the IOUs were there—paper, and it's there. And it's frankly not a very encouraging sight. It's not encouraging especially when you consider that times are changing in America, that the math for Social Security is changing significantly. By "the math" I mean this: In 1950, there were about 16 workers paying taxes for every beneficiary—16 workers for beneficiary. And today, there's 3.3 workers for every beneficiary. By the time our children and grandchildren are ready to retire, there will only be 2 workers paying for every beneficiary in the system.

That's only part of the problem. To compound the problem, the first baby boomers will soon start retiring. I happen to be one of them. As a matter of fact, I'm eligible to start collecting benefits in 2008, which happens to be a convenient year for me. [*Laughter*] The retirement of the baby boomer generation is going to have a huge impact on Social Security, because my generation is about 50 percent larger than my parents' generation. Today, there are about 40 million retirees receiving benefits. By the time all the baby boomers have retired, there will be more than 72 million retirees receiving benefits. And thanks to advances in modern medicine, these retirees will live longer and collect

benefits over longer retirements than the previous generation.

And to compound the problem even further, Congress has ensured that benefits to my generation will grow faster than our economy or the rate of inflation. In other words, people went around the country saying, "Vote for me. I'll make sure your benefits are higher." And so this sets up an enormous fiscal challenge facing Social Security. With each passing year, there will be fewer workers paying ever-higher benefits to a larger number of retirees who are living longer.

And so here's the result: 3 years from now, when the first baby boomers start collecting Social Security benefits, the system will start heading toward the red. Less than a decade later, in 2017, Social Security will go negative. And by that I mean it will be paying out more in benefits than it collects in payroll taxes, more money going out than coming in. And every year after that, the shortfall will get worse.

In the year 2027, the Government will somehow have to come up with an extra $200 billion to fund the system—$200 billion more going out than coming in through payroll taxes. In 2034, the annual shortfall will be more than $300 billion a year. And by the year 2041, the entire system will be bankrupt. Now, think about that. If we don't do something to fix the system now, the students graduating this spring from the University of South Carolina or, in deference to the Speaker, Clemson—[*laughter*]—will spend their entire careers paying Social Security taxes only to see the system go bankrupt a few years before they retire.

And I don't care if you're a Republican or Democrat, these are the facts. And the question is, do we have the will to do something about them? Now, in South Carolina, you know that once you're in the red, the options of getting out are never very appealing. If we allow Social Security to continue on its current path toward bankruptcy, we will leave our children and grandchildren with only a few drastic options to keep the system afloat. In other words, the longer you wait, the longer we don't do anything in Washington, the more drastic the solutions become.

For example, some estimate if we don't do anything, the payroll tax will get up to 18 percent. Is that a legacy we want to leave on younger generations of Americans? I don't think so. Or we're going to have to dramatically slash benefits or cut other Federal programs. The Social Security trust reported this—they said, "Every year we wait to fix the system will add an additional $600 billion to the cost of reform."

I understand why some in Washington don't want to take on this issue. I guess they calculate there's a political cost when dealing with a tough issue. I think there's a political cost for not dealing with the issue. And so I've been traveling this country of ours, making it absolutely clear what the problems are. See, my strategy is pretty simple: Take the message to the people and define the facts of the problem, and let the people draw their own conclusions. I've been to 22 States to explain the facts. I've been to those States to explain the urgent need for the United States Congress to work with the administration to get something done now. And more and more Americans are beginning to hear the message.

I'm just starting. I'm just warming up. As a matter of fact, I like getting out of Washington, DC. I like coming to places like South Carolina to put the facts on the table so the people can make their own mind about what's happening in Social Security.

I don't know if you've ever heard of Dutch Fork High School in Irmo. I met a very innovative teacher who assigned her students this assignment: Why don't you write letters to the editor about their impressions of Social Security? Here's what one of her students wrote: "By the time my generation gets to the age to draw Social Security, there will be no money left for us to draw on." This is a young high school student writing that. This isn't a professor in economics. This is a high school student. He said, "I don't know about other people, but I don't like the sound of that." People are beginning to get the message that there is a problem in Social Security.

Today I met an 80-year-old—80-year-old "young" woman from Silverstreet named Shirley. She said she's counting on Social Security. She gets a Social Security check every

month, and she's confident she'll keep getting her checks. And there's no doubt in her mind she's going to get her checks, but there's a doubt in her mind as to whether or not her granddaughters are going to have comfort in their retirement, whether or not the safety net will be there for them. Here's what she said: She said, "I don't know what I would do without it. It's my granddaughters that I'm worried about, and I want to do whatever is possible to fix the system for them."

Folks, we're talking about a generational issue here in America. The grandfolks are going to get their checks, and the fundamental question is, do we have the will in Washington, DC, to make sure the system works for the grandchildren of America? And that's what I'm here talking about.

I believe I have a duty to ask people to bring ideas forward. I brought a few myself, and I appreciate the response of Senator Lindsey Graham. He's brought some ideas forward, as has Senator Jim DeMint, as has your Governor. These men have been leaders in the debate. They've stepped up and said, "Here are some ideas I'd like you to consider." But they're not the only ones who have set up good ideas. Former Congressman Tim Penny, a Democrat from Minnesota, has suggested tying Social Security benefits to prices rather than wages. My predecessor, Bill Clinton, had time—had meetings all around the country on Social Security, and he spoke of increasing the retirement age at one time.

I put together a Commission of Republicans and Democrats, headed by the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, and they did fine work. They recommended changing the way benefits are calculated. In other words, people are putting ideas on the table. An interesting idea was put forward by a Democrat Social Security expert named Robert Pozen, who has proposed a progressive way of structuring benefits that will be more generous to low-income workers. And that's an important idea.

In other words, all these ideas are on the table, but they have one thing in common. They all require us to act now. Saving Social Security is not a Republican goal. It is not a Democrat goal. It is a vital goal to all our country, and people of both political parties need to get the job done now.

There are some basic principles that must guide our efforts to fix Social Security. We should not raise the payroll tax rate. That would hurt the economy and cost jobs. We must ensure that Social Security continues to provide dignity and peace of mind for Americans in retirement and include extra protections for those with low incomes. We must reject temporary measures that put off Social Security problems for another day.

You need to be skeptical about any talk that talks about a 75-year fix. Back in 1983, Republicans and Democrats came together on what they thought was a 75-year fix. You know, I like the spirit of people of both parties coming together, and that was great. President Reagan and Speaker O'Neill said, "We got a problem. Let's come together to fix it." But they thought it was a 75-year fix; here we are, 22 years later. It's time to come up with a permanent solution. When people bring forth their ideas in Congress, I will insist that we not have a bandaid approach to Social Security, that we have a permanent fix. And I'm optimistic about the chances for meaningful Social Security reform.

You know, a few weeks ago the United States Senate voted on a resolution guaranteeing that any Social Security fix must be permanent. The vote has the agreement of the two Senators from South Carolina, the two Senators from Texas, the two Senators from Massachusetts. Any time that happens, you've got yourself a bipartisan agreement. [*Laughter*] In fact, the vote in Congress was unanimous. Think about that. Every single United States Senator is on the record supporting a permanent fix. Now those Senators need to keep their word and make Social Security solvent once and for all.

Bringing permanent solvency to Social Security is an important start, but it's only part of our duty. Preserving Social Security should not mean preserving its problems. Today, we have an opportunity to offer younger Americans a better deal than the current system. Today, we can give every American the chance to tap into the power of compound interest, so they can get a higher rate of return on their money than the current system

allows. You might notice I said "their money." See, we're not spending the Government's money. The payroll taxes are the people's money. It's coming from hard-working people.

We can build this opportunity into Social Security by giving younger workers the option to set aside some of their own money in a personal retirement account. The account would be a conservative mix of bonds and stocks that grows over time and can deliver a greater return than the Social Security system does. That would be a good deal for younger workers.

Since 1983, since that reform took place, stock investments have returned about 9 percent more than inflation per year, while the real return on Social Security is about 2 percent a year. That means that a dollar invested in the market in 1983 would be worth $11 today—one dollar would grow to 11—while the same dollar would be worth about 3 if it had been put in Social Security. Every young American should have the opportunity to take advantage of the compounding rate of interest to earn a better return on his or her own money.

Personal accounts would be completely voluntary. Younger workers could choose to join or choose not to join. That seems to make sense, for Government to provide opportunities of choice for individual Americans. Workers opting to open an account would be able to put about a third of their payroll taxes in investments instead of sending their money to Washington. For example, a younger worker earning an average of $35,000 a year over a career, because of the growth of money, would be able to retire with a nest egg of nearly a quarter-million dollars. That would be a nice addition to the other Social Security benefits.

These voluntary accounts would come with strict guidelines to make sure they're secure. You couldn't take—put them in the lottery—sorry to say, Speaker. [*Laughter*] You could make sure the earnings aren't eaten up by hidden Wall Street fees. We'll make sure there are good options to protect investments from sudden market swings on the eve of retirement. You won't be able to withdraw all your money and take it to the racetrack. These accounts will offer straightforward investment choices that are easy to understand.

By the way, this concept isn't new. After all, in South Carolina, all State employees can choose to put part of their retirement savings in a traditional retirement plan or in a conservative mix of bonds and stocks that can deliver a better rate of return. So when I talk about personal accounts available for younger workers, you know what I'm talking about right here in South Carolina. You've already made that decision for people who are serving the State.

I don't know if you know this or not, but Federal employees have that same opportunity to watch their money grow, through a program called the Thrift Savings Plan. It's a plan that allows Members of the United States Congress and the United States Senate to set aside some of their own money, if they so choose to do so, in a conservative mix of bonds and stocks. It seems fair to me that if setting up a personal savings account is good enough for a Member of the United States Congress, it is good enough for workers all across America.

By giving younger workers an option to set up a personal savings account, we have an opportunity to modernize and strengthen a great American program. We have a chance to bring the Social Security system into the 21st century.

The reason I say that is, today, young people are comfortable investing in bonds and stocks. Millions of workers now choose to plan for retirement with their own savings accounts through programs like 401(k)s. I don't remember growing up hearing the word "401(k)." I don't think you remember that. You're old enough to be around when they didn't have 401(k)s—[*laughter*]—or IRAs. We're not talking about a new culture. We're talking about a culture that's already taken hold in our society, where workers from all walks of life are watching their money grow and making decisions on behalf of their families with where they invest.

See, telling younger workers they have to save money in a 1930s retirement system is like telling them that they have to use a cell phone with a rotary dial. [*Laughter*] If young people are confident they can improve their retirement by investing in a conservative mix

of bonds and stocks, the Government should not stand in their way.

Creating these accounts will also give our children and grandchildren a chance to replace a burden of uncertainty with a new opportunity. Instead of leaving their full retirement in the hands of future politicians, younger workers will be able to take part of their retirement into their own hands. Instead of sending all the payroll taxes to Washington, younger workers would be able to transfer part of their money directly into an account they own and that the Government can never take away. Instead of forfeiting years of Social Security contributions if they die before retirement, younger workers would have peace of mind that their personal accounts could be passed on to a loved one.

Young people are learning more about the opportunity to own part of their retirement, and they're making their opinion pretty clear. I met Philip Meador today. He's a graduating senior from The Citadel. He told me he's going to be starting a new job in June. He knows he's going to start paying Social Security taxes. What he's not sure about is whether or not he'll ever be seeing a Social Security check. He certainly will be paying in; he's not so sure what's going to be coming out. He likes the idea of keeping part of his money in an account that he controls. He said, "I like the options. You choose what to put in. You choose the investments. It depends on what you're looking for. I think every individual should be able to choose a plan that fits them."

A lot of young people are beginning to say that. A lot of young people want this United States Government to come together and make sure there's not a huge burden when they grow up. A lot of young people want the Government to give them the option of making choices with their own money.

And I know you all feel the same way in this chamber. That's why you passed resolutions calling on the United States Congress to strengthen this important program, Social Security, and to give younger workers the option of voluntary personal retirement accounts. You recognize that a Social Security system that includes personal accounts will give all Americans, not just a few but all Americans, a stake in the greatest creator of wealth the world has ever known. You recognize that personal accounts will bring the security and independence of ownership to millions of our citizens. And you recognize that personal accounts are critical to building an ownership society, a more optimistic and more hopeful America in which more people own their own homes, more people own their own businesses, more people have ownership in a retirement account, more people have an asset base they call their own that they can pass on to whomever they choose.

You see, owning assets ought not to be confined to a few people in our society. Owning an asset and being able to pass it on to your son or daughter ought not to be the purview of a few. In this great land, it ought to be spread—ownership ought to be spread to everybody who is lucky enough to be an American. You recognize that when people own something, they have a vital stake in the future of our country, and that personal accounts will help give every citizen the chance, the opportunity to realize the dreams of this land.

The legislature of this great State of South Carolina has shown leadership on this important issue, and now the United States Congress needs to do the same. I understand that Social Security is a tough issue, but Congress has tackled tough issues before. We've seen in the past how leaders from both parties can rise above partisan politics to meet great responsibilities. And now is the time for them to do so again.

I am confident that Members of Congress will come together to reach a permanent solution. And when they do, our children and grandchildren will one day look back and be grateful that our generation made the difficult choices and the necessary choices to renew the great promise of the Social Security system for the 21st century.

I want to thank you all for the invitation to come to your great State. I appreciate you giving me a chance to come and visit. It's an honor to talk about such an important topic with those who have been willing to serve. May God bless you in your efforts, and may God bless your families, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:17 p.m. at the South Carolina Statehouse. In his remarks, he referred to David H. Wilkins, speaker, South Carolina house of representatives; Gov. Mark Sanford and Lt. Gov. Andre Bauer of South Carolina; and Glenn F. McConnell, president pro tempore, and Hugh K. Leatherman, Sr., majority leader, South Carolina senate.

Interview With the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation

April 18, 2005

Q. Thank you for your time, Mr. President.

The President. My honor, thank you.

U.S. Support for Lebanese Freedom

Q. Recently there isn't a day that passes by without you mentioning Lebanon. Why now, this country that was under occupation for almost 30 years, became so important for the United States?

The President. Well, there's a movement toward freedom around the world. And the Lebanese people have made it clear that they want to be free of Syrian influence; they want there to be free elections. And the United States of America stands squarely with the people of Lebanon.

Syrian Withdrawal From Lebanon

Q. Are you concerned, Mr. President, that your calls for freedom in Lebanon, for free elections, and for the Syrians to be out of Lebanon could be seen as interfering in Lebanon's internal affairs?

The President. No, I don't think so. I think people will see that the United States is consistent in working with the people so that they can have a free voice, and so they get to decide the Government. The people of Lebanon will decide who is in their Government, not the United States. But the United States can join with the rest of the world, like we've done, and say to Syria, "Get out—not only get out with your military forces, but get out with your intelligence services too. Get completely out of Lebanon, so Lebanon can be free and the people can be free."

Q. Do you have any doubts that Syria will be out by end of April?

The President. I am pleased that they're beginning to get out. And we expect them to be completely out, and I mean not only the troops but the people that have had—that have been embedded in parts of Government, some of the intelligence services that have been embedded in Government and others. They need to get completely out of Lebanon so the people of Lebanon can decide the fate of the country, not another Government, not agents of another Government, but the people.

And Lebanon is a great country, and Lebanon has had a fantastic history. It's also had some difficult days. But I think there is a better day ahead for the people of Lebanon, and I think people, no matter what their politics may be, really want Lebanon to succeed.

Lebanese Freedom

Q. Mr. President, I'm sure you saw the pictures of the demonstrations in Lebanon. Beirut was packed with maybe a million people in the street, calling for freedom and democracy in Lebanon. What was your—what did you feel when you saw it?

The President. Well, I wasn't surprised, because I think everybody wants to be free. I think people long to be free, and I think people are tired of living under a Government which, in essence, was a foreign occupation.

The other thing is, in our great country, there's a lot of Lebanese Americans that love Lebanon. And everywhere I go in my country, people are saying, "Now, listen, as the President, you must work there to be a free Lebanon." And so I'm not surprised. If the spirit of those Lebanese Americans is strong here, imagine what the spirit will be of their relatives and friends in Beirut. People live in a free society here, and not one there, but there will be one soon.

Hezbollah/Implementing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559

Q. You worked closely with the French on resolution 1559. And this resolution calls Hezbollah to disarm. How will the United States ensure this happens?

The President. Well, first things first, and that is to make sure that there are free elections. Secondly, listen, we put Hezbollah on

the terrorist list for a reason; they've killed Americans in the past. And we will continue to work with the international community to keep the pressure on this group of people. And we'll work with the international community to fully implement 1559.

But ultimately, the people of Lebanon are going to decide the fate of the country. And you can't have a free country if a group of people are like an armed militia. In other words, there needs to be police organized by the state, a military organized by the state. But citizens groups that are armed, trying to impose their will on a free society is just not the definition of a free society.

Q. But Mr. President, what if Lebanon is not capable of implementing this element of the resolution 1559?

The President. Well, the international community is going to have to work to help them achieve that capability. Listen, not every free society is capable of internal security right off the bat. And there's ways for the international community to come together to reassure the people that there will be help to secure the country.

Freedom in the Middle East

Q. I'm sure, Mr. President, you heard what I want to say maybe thousands of times, and maybe from Presidents and Kings that come and see you here in the White House—some people think that it's not in the best interest of America to have democratic Arab countries——

The President. Right.

Q. ——because democracy and free elections may help anti-American groups, radical groups to come to power. What do you respond to that?

The President. I respond to them and say, "Well, I guess they don't really understand me, and they don't understand my view of freedom, because I think freedom is embedded in everybody's soul." I do believe there is an Almighty God, and I believe that freedom is that Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. I believe that a true free society, one that self-governs, one that listens to the people, will be a peaceful society, not an angry society but a peaceful society.

And the reason I believe that is because I believe, for example, most mothers want to raise their children in a peaceful world, and they want their little children to be able to go to school and to grow up in peace. And if that's the ultimate feeling of the people, the Government, if it's a true democracy, will reflect that.

Support for the Lebanese Economy

Q. Well, Mr. President, I'm sure you know that Lebanon is also facing severe economic problems.

The President. Yes.

Q. Would the U.S. be willing to rally the world community to help Lebanon's economy?

The President. Of course. The United States as well as European finance ministers would want to work closely with international organizations, like the IMF or the World Bank, to help this country get back on its feet after occupation, help this new democracy succeed. Yes, there will be plenty of help.

The Lebanese people are going to have to, though, however, have elections. In my judgment, they ought to be as scheduled. And the elections need to be free and fair, without interference. There will be monitors, hopefully, international monitors, to make sure they're free and fair. The people of that good country ought to feel comfortable about going out and voting and expressing their opinion. And when a democracy is up and running, I believe the international community will want to help this new democracy.

Syria-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, we all know that Syrian-American relations are at their lowest now. Is there a roadmap for Syria to improve its relationship with the United States?

The President. Well, Syria has heard from us before. We have made it very clear that—what we expect, in order to be able to have relations with us. First on the agenda, right now, there's two things immediately that come to mind. One is to stop supporting Ba'athists in Iraq, stop those people in Syria who are funneling money and helping smuggle people and arms into Iraq. They've heard that message directly from me. And secondly,

of course, is to completely withdraw from Lebanon. Syria must shut down Hezbollah offices. Hezbollah not only is trying to destabilize the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, but Hezbollah, as you know, is a dangerous organization.

Q. But those offices are in Lebanon; they're not in Syria.

The President. Well, they're in Syria too. And Syria has got to do its part about making sure that Hezbollah doesn't receive support from Syria.

Q. What if the diplomatic effort and the sanctions fail in changing Syrian attitudes? Is there another option?

The President. Well, I think the Government will feel the international pressure. We're just beginning. And obviously, diplomacy is the first course of action. And we hope—I think diplomacy will work.

Israel-Syria Relations

Q. Mr. President, for the last four or five decades, Israel was seen as a country trying hard to be accepted by its Arab neighbors and signing peace agreements with them. Nowadays we hear someone like President Bashir of Syria complaining that all Syria's attempts to relaunch peace talks with Israel were not taken seriously. Are you doing something to intervene and maybe to put the two parties together?

The President. Well, first of all, Syria and Israel have got current obligations. Syria has got a current obligation to get out of Lebanon. And again I'll repeat this, because I want it very clear what I mean by, "Get out of Lebanon." I mean not only troops but intelligence services as well. And we expect that to happen. Syria has also got to stop inciting or providing—allowing people in their country to incite violence against Iraqi citizens and our coalition troops.

Israel has got obligations under the current roadmap to help the Palestinians. Israel is getting ready to withdraw from Gaza, and we expect the Government of Israel—and want to work with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to make this withdraw successful. And so there's a lot of obligations that these two countries have right now in order to affect world peace.

Late Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri

Q. I want to go back to Lebanon and ask you, Mr. President, what do you recall from your last meeting with the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri?

The President. Yes. I remember I met members—I remember their family love. I remember how proud he was of his boys. And then Laura and I met Mrs. Hariri in France when we were there. I was there visiting President Chirac, and he hosted a dinner for me and my delegation, and Mrs. Chirac kindly hosted a dinner for Laura, and Mrs. Hariri was one of the guests. I remember how striking she was, very lovely lady. I know her heart is broken at the loss of her husband.

Prime Minister Hariri was here to talk to me about Lebanese affairs. He clearly loved the country and loved the people of Lebanon. And I know he'll be sorely missed.

Message to Lebanese People

Q. Mr. President, is there anything else you would like to convey to the Lebanese people?

The President. I will. United States believes in freedom, and we appreciate courage. We appreciate the courage of those who are willing to stand up and say, "We want to be free. We want to be a democracy. We want to help establish a Government that responds to the people." And you'll have our help.

Q. Thank you so much, Mr. President. We greatly appreciate it.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:56 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 19. In his remarks, the President referred to Nazek Hariri, widow of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14 in Beirut; and President Jacques Chirac of France and his wife, Bernadette. The interviewer referred to President Bashir al-Asad of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Dedication in Springfield, Illinois

April 19, 2005

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Laura and I are so very grateful for your generous invitation to be here. Mr. Speaker, thank you for your incredibly warm words. I appreciate your leadership. I appreciate your friendship, and so do the people of Illinois.

I am so honored to be here to dedicate a great institution honoring such a great American. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum was a long time coming. But as many speakers have said, it's really worth the wait. Laura and I were just given a tour by Richard—appreciate his leadership, by the way. I guess the best way to describe what we saw is a superb collection, a superb resource for scholars, and an invitation for all, especially the young, to rediscover Lincoln for themselves.

The mission of this library is essential to our country, because to understand the life and the sacrifice of Abraham Lincoln is to understand the meaning and promise of America. Most of you all know the First Lady was a librarian. Any time she can get me into a library is a pretty good deal, as far as she's concerned. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your Governor and Patti for their hospitality. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor.

I thank the two United States Senators from Illinois, Senator Durbin and Obama. I appreciate the members of the United States congressional delegation who are here. I particularly want to pay my respects to Ray LaHood, who has worked so hard on this project.

I want to thank all the members of the statehouse who are here. I appreciate the mayor, Mayor Davlin. I appreciate the secretary of State and treasurer—I appreciate you all for coming.

It's an honor to be here with our fellow citizens. I particularly want to say thanks to my friend Jim Edgar for his leadership to get this museum going. I want to thank Brian Lamb. C–SPAN happens to be one of my mother's favorite networks. [*Laughter*] I particularly want to thank Mihan Lee for standing up in front of us and expressing her words so eloquently about living in a free society. I thank Reverend McLean for his prayers. And I thank you all for coming.

All of us have come here today because of our great appreciation for the 16th President of the United States. In a small way, I can relate to the railsplitter from out West because he had a way of speaking that was not always appreciated by the newspapers back East. [*Laughter*] A New York Times story on his first Inaugural Address reported that Mr. Lincoln was lucky "it was not the constitution of the English language and the laws of English grammar that he was called upon to support." [*Laughter*] I think that fellow is still writing for the Times. [*Laughter*]

In Washington, DC, where Lincoln served America and where he was assassinated, we honor his influence in a great temple of democracy. Here in Springfield, in Illinois, where he lived along with Mary and where their sons were born and where the funeral train ended its journey 140 years ago, we honor his good life in a more personal way. Here we can walk through his house, see his belongings, and read the Gettysburg Address in his own hand. And even across the mounting years, we can sense the power of his mind, the depth of his convictions, and the decency that defined his entire life.

Abraham Lincoln started life in the last month of Thomas Jefferson's Presidency, with no early advantages other than curiosity and character. Before history took notice, he earned money as a storekeeper, a surveyor, and a postmaster. He taught himself the law. He established a successful legal practice and rose in a new political party on the power of his words. Those who knew him remembered his candor, his kindness, and his searching intellect, his combination of frontier humor with the cadences of Shakespeare and the Holy Bible. As a State legislator in Springfield, a Congressman, and a debater on the stump, Lincoln embodied the democratic ideal that leadership and even genius are found among the people themselves and sometimes in the most unlikely places.

Young Lincoln didn't worry much about how he looked or what he wore. He took

great care with the things he said, and Americans took notice beyond the borders of Illinois. In New York City, an eyewitness at his Cooper Union Speech in 1860 said this: "His face lighted up as with an inward fire. The whole man was transfigured. I forgot his clothes, his personal appearance, and his individual peculiarities. Presently forgetting myself, I was on my feet with the rest, cheering this wonderful man."

An ambitious young Lincoln was heard to lament that the great work of the American Revolution was all in the past. When he departed Springfield as President-elect, he spoke of duties perhaps even greater than George Washington faced. Events proved him correct. His very election as President was regarded as a cause for war. And as he sent legions of men to death and sacrifice, Lincoln's own burden began to show in a lined and tired face.

Without really knowing it, the American people had chosen perhaps the only man who could preserve our unity and assure our future as a great nation. He was the relentless enemy of secession, without hatred or malice toward those who seceded. He grieved every day at the ruin and waste of war, yet he knew that even this tragedy could be redeemed by the renewal of American ideals. On Good Friday, 1865, Lincoln did not know it was his last day on Earth. But on that day, he knew that all the sacrifices and the sorrow across the land had meaning, and the Union had been saved.

When his life was taken, Abraham Lincoln assumed a greater role in the story of America than man or President. Every generation has looked up to him as the Great Emancipator, the hero of unity, and the martyr of freedom. Children have learned to follow his model of integrity and principle. Leaders have read and quoted his words and have hoped to find a measure of his wisdom and strength. In all this, Lincoln has taken on the elements of myth. And in this case, the myth is true. In the character and convictions of this one man, we see all that America hopes to be.

Lincoln's career and contributions were founded on a single argument: That there are no exceptions to the ringing promises of the Declaration of Independence; that all of us who share the human race are created equal. At a campaign stop in Chicago, Lincoln said, "If that Declaration is not the truth, let us get out the statute book, in which we find it and tear it out. Who is so bold as to do it? Let us stick to it then. Let us stand firmly by it then."

This led him over time to confront the great tension in America's founding between the promise of liberty and the fact of slavery. Lincoln was morally offended by what he called "the monstrous injustice of slavery itself." And he believed the permanent acceptance of the institution of slavery would represent the end of the American ideal. He would not accept that our new world of hope and freedom must forever be a prison for millions. And so with the relentless logic and clarity of Lincoln, he pushed his countrymen to choose: Live up to the truth written into human nature by our Creator, or disavow the freedom our Forefathers had earned.

President Lincoln sought every reasonable political compromise that might avoid war, but he did not believe America could surrender its founding commitments and remain the same country. As his Presidency unfolded, this conviction gathered force and urgency until the day he freed millions by signing a proclamation. And then he looked up and said, "That will do." Days before his death in April 1865, Lincoln spoke from a White House window and declared that the right to vote should be extended to some freed men and African Americans who had fought for the Union. In that audience was a man named Booth, who vowed, this is "the last speech he will ever make."

Lincoln's voice was silenced, but he, more than any other American, has spoken to all the ages, and his words have haunted and driven our history. His authority was asserted after the war as we corrected our Constitution and finally ended the great national sin of slavery. Citizens enlisted Lincoln's principles in the fight to bring the vote to women and to end Jim Crow laws. When Martin Luther King, Jr., called America to redeem the promissory note of the Declaration, he stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, and Lincoln was behind him in more ways than one. From the lunch counter to the schoolhouse door to the Army barracks, President

Lincoln has continued to hold this Nation to its promises. And we will never relent. We will never rest until those promises are met.

The convictions that have guided our history are also at issue in our world. We also face some questions in our time: Do the promises of the Declaration apply beyond the culture that produced it? Are some, because of birth or background, destined to live in tyranny, or do all, regardless of birth or background, deserve to live in freedom? Americans have no right or calling to impose our own form of government on others. Yet, American interests and values are both served by standing for liberty in every part of the world.

Our interests are served when former enemies become democratic partners, because free governments do not support terror or seek to conquer their neighbors. Our interests are served by the spread of democratic societies because free societies reward the hopes of their citizens, instead of feeding the hatreds that lead to violence. Our deepest values are also served when we take our part in freedom's advance, when the chains of millions are broken and the captives are set free, because we are honored to serve the cause that gave us birth.

Sometimes the progress of liberty comes gradually, like water that cuts through stone. Sometimes progress comes like a wildfire, kindled by example and courage. We see that example and courage today in Afghanistan and Kyrgystan, Ukraine, Georgia, and Iraq. We believe that people in Zimbabwe and Iran and Lebanon and beyond have the same hopes, the same rights, and the same future of self-government. The principles of the Declaration still inspire, and the words of the Declaration are forever true. So we will stick to it. We will stand firmly by it.

Every generation strives to define the lessons of Abraham Lincoln, and that is part of our tribute to the man himself. None of us can claim his legacy as our own, but all of us can learn from the faith that guided him. He trusted in freedom and in the wisdom of the Founders, even in the darkest hours. That trust has helped Americans carry on, even after the second day of Gettysburg, even on December 8, 1941, even on September the 12th, 2001. Whenever freedom is challenged, the proper response is to go forward with confidence in freedom's power.

Lincoln also trusted in the ways of Providence, the working of an unseen power. He knew the course of Providence is not always what we hope or ask or expect, but he trusted still. In his example, we are reminded to be patient and humble, knowing that God's purpose and God's justice will break forth in time.

Abraham Lincoln had a streak of melancholy in him. He said our short lives are like "the break of the wave." But the wave of his life is still felt in our world. The Union he saved still thanks him. The people he freed still honor him. And here in the place he called home, Springfield, Illinois, we proudly dedicate the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:59 a.m. in Union Square Park. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Norton Smith, executive director, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum; Gov. Rod Blagojevich of Illinois and his wife, Patti; Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, Secretary of State Jesse White, and State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka of Illinois; Mayor Timothy J. Davlin of Springfield, IL; Jim Edgar, president, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation; Brian P. Lamb, chairman and chief executive officer, C–SPAN; Mihan Lee, grand prize winner, C–SPAN Lincoln Essay Contest; and Rev. Gordon McLean, First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, IL.

Remarks on Arrival From Springfield

April 19, 2005

Pope Benedict XVI

Laura and I offer our congratulations to Pope Benedict XVI. He's a man of great wisdom and knowledge. He's a man who serves the Lord. We remember well his sermon at the Pope's funeral in Rome, how his words touched our hearts and the hearts of millions. We join with our fellow citizens and millions around the world who pray for continued strength and wisdom as His Holiness leads the Catholic Church.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:31 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Statement on the Tenth Anniversary of the Oklahoma City Bombing

April 19, 2005

The tenth anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing takes us back to the terrible tragedy that touched all Americans and took the lives of so many from Oklahoma City. We remember the malice that led to the death of 168 innocent people in the Murrah Federal Building. For the survivors of this crime and for the families of the dead, the pain goes on. We also remember the many acts of courage and kindness we saw in the midst of that horror. Oklahoma City will always be one of those places in our national memory where the worst and the best both came to pass. We pray for the lives that were lost that day, and we pray for their families. We ask God for strength and peace for those who lost so much.

Message on the Observance of Passover, 5765

April 19, 2005

I send greetings to those observing Passover, beginning at sundown on April 23.

This celebration marks the historic exodus of the Israelites from Pharaoh's oppression more than 3,000 years ago. During Passover, Jews around the world gather with family and friends to share the story of God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery to freedom. Through songs and prayers, they remember the blessings and mercy of a just and loving God. By passing this story from generation to generation, they teach the triumph of faith over tyranny and celebrate God's promise of freedom.

The lesson of this story is timeless and reminds us that even in the face of struggle, hope endures. As we work to bring hope to the oppressed, we recall the words of the Psalmist, which are read at the Seder meal: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Passover.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Proclamation 7888—Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 2005

April 19, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As we enjoy the great freedoms of our country, we are mindful of our obligation to pass on to our children the values that sustain our liberty and our democracy. On Education and Sharing Day, we reaffirm our commitment to teach young people the lessons they need to preserve and strengthen our Nation, and to reach as far as their vision and character can take them.

Education and Sharing Day honors the memory of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who established education and outreach centers that offer social services and humanitarian aid around the world. Commemorating his life and legacy teaches the next generation that a single life of conscience and purpose can touch and lift up many lives. By helping to heal a broken heart, surrounding a friend with love, feeding the hungry, or providing shelter for the homeless, we can change America for the better, one heart, one soul, and one conscience at a time.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 20, 2005, as Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A. I call upon all our citizens to dedicate their time and talents to help our rising generation grow into caring and responsible adults.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of

the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 20, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 21.

Remarks Honoring the 2005 National and State Teachers of the Year

April 20, 2005

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome. Welcome to the Rose Garden. And it's a beautiful day to continue the tradition of honoring America's finest teachers at the White House. We're really happy you're here.

Somewhere along the way, all of us got to know a teacher who made a real difference in our lives. In my case, I married one—[*laughter*]—and I appreciate you. I appreciate my love for Laura. I appreciate Laura's love for teaching, and I appreciate the great job you're doing as the First Lady.

She was raised in Midland, just like you were, Carol. Maybe that has something to do with it.

We like to say in our household, teaching is more than a job; it is a calling. You know what I'm talking about. You wouldn't be sitting here if you had not heard the calling. By helping every child realize his or her potential, our teachers show their students that dreams can become reality. What a fantastic job, isn't it, to help somebody realize a dream can become a reality. All who answer the call to teach deserve our support, our respect, and our affection.

Somebody who understands the role of a teacher is our Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, who is with us. Margaret has been a longtime friend. We were involved with education reform in Texas. We bring the spirit of reform to Washington, DC, and you're doing a fine job, Madam Secretary.

The chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, John Boehner, is with us, from the great State of Ohio. Thank you, John. Bob Filner from California; Doc Hastings from Washington; Leonard Boswell from the great State of Iowa—welcome. Appreciate you all. I want to thank you for taking time out of your schedules to come here. This is an important moment, and I appreciate you recognizing it as such.

I want to thank the Mayor. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. I always like to tell the Mayor that it's important for the Mayor to fill the potholes—[*laughter*]—particularly close to White House, Mayor. And you're doing a fine job. Last time I saw the Mayor was at Opening Day. For those of you who follow professional baseball, you know that we've got the Nationals here in town. It's exciting for the Nation's Capital to have the Nationals. And one of the reasons the Nationals are here is because of the Mayor. And so, Mr. Mayor, thank you for your leadership.

And City Councilwoman Carol Schwartz, who I referred to earlier—Laura, Carol, and I were raised in Midland, Texas. Pretty long odds for three people raised in Midland to end up in Washington in the Rose Garden, by the way. [*Laughter*] But welcome, glad you're here, Carol.

I want to thank the National Teacher of the Year finalists: Stan Murphy from California—San Diego, California; Vicki Goldsmith from Des Moines, Iowa; Tamara Steen from Washington State. We're proud you all are here.

And of course, Jason Kamras, who is standing right here. I want to welcome his parents, Linda and Marvin. Thank you for coming. Congratulations on raising such a fine man. And Jeremy—Jason allowed his brothers, Jeremy and Michael, to show up as well. [*Laughter*] I asked one of the boys if they ever thought Jason would amount to anything. He told the truth. [*Laughter*] Jason has proved you wrong. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the 51 other State Teachers of the Year for being teachers and being such an accomplished teacher that you're being recognized here in the Rose Garden. We welcome you here. We thank you for your compassion. And we welcome your guests, as well.

We welcome Tom Houlihan, the executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, and we appreciate you sponsoring this event. We welcome Ernie Fleishman,

the senior vice president of Scholastic, Inc., which is a sponsoring organization of this event. We welcome Tom McInerney, the CEO of ING U.S. Financial Services, which is one of the sponsors of this event. Obviously, this is a big event to have required three sponsors. [*Laughter*] We're glad you're here. We want to thank the chief State school officers who are here today.

I want to pay particular respect to an educational entrepreneur who has shown one person can make an enormous difference. Wendy Kopp, the president and founder of Teach For America, is with us. And we welcome you back to the White House, Wendy, and we're glad you're here. There is a reason why Wendy is here, which you will hear in a minute.

America's teachers help our students develop the schools—skills they need to succeed in our schools. That's what you do. You teach a child how to read and write, but you also teach a child how to think and hope. Teaching is a demanding job. It's an incredibly demanding job. And I hope our fellow citizens understand how hard it is to get to the classroom every day and to keep your spirits up, to keep your vision clear about what is possible, and to keep your patience. I'm sure we tested our—patience of our teachers a lot, Mayor, when you and I were growing up. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the fact that good teachers instill a passion for learning. You know, passion is a powerful world—word, and that's why the teachers are here with us, because they have instilled a passion for somebody to go to class every day to learn. When young people become good students with big dreams, they become better citizens. Our country is better off as a result of our teachers instilling passion and hope.

We expect a lot from our teachers, and teachers have a right to expect a lot from us. Education is one of the top priorities of this administration and this Congress. That's why we passed the No Child Left Behind Act. People from both parties came together. I love the spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act. I suspect the teachers love the spirit of challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. People believe that we ought to set high standards and believe that every child—and if you do believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, it makes sense to determine whether they are, so we can—and if not, so we can solve problems early, before it's too late.

Because of teachers and hard work, because we expect every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract, there's an achievement gap in America which is closing. I can say it's closing because we measure to find out if it is closing. I'm proud to report that test scores are up. In fourth grade, math test scores are up across the Nation by nine points over the last 3 years. Eighth graders improved by five points over the same period of time. We're making progress.

There is more to do. Margaret and I believe we ought to build on this success by bringing higher standards and accountability to the Nation's high schools. I'm sure the Nation's finest teachers share our commitment that every student must be prepared for college and, therefore, prepared for the jobs of the 21st century, so we can say after it's all said and done, no child was left behind in our country.

One of the finest teachers in our country is with us today. He is the 2005 National Teacher of the Year, Jason Kamras. He teaches mathematics at John Philip Sousa Middle School, right here in the Nation's Capital. Jason joined the Teach For America program. He did so because he wanted to show students, the so-called "hard to educate," that with high works and high standards, they can overcome any challenge they face.

The Teach For America program asks for a 2-year commitment. Jason is now in his 8th year of that 2-year commitment. Because he chose to stay, countless students have better lives and they have a better future. He's usually at work at 7 a.m., and he rarely leaves before 7 p.m. He's had high expectations for himself, and he sets high expectations for his students. He works tirelessly to raise math scores, and his students are responding. Jason says, "Nothing surpasses the joy I feel when a student proclaims proudly, 'Mr. Kamras, now I get it.'" I suspect the teachers here understand exactly what he means by saying that.

Like all great teachers, Jason knows that his students' needs do not end when the school bell rings. He understands that at the end of the day, there's more work to be done. And so he cofounded a program called EXPOSE, which takes students out of their southwest Washington neighborhoods to places like the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials or the National Gallery of Art.

Jason is also teaching his students how to produce photos about their lives and communities. I think you'll find it interesting to know that these photos have been shown at the Capital Children's Museum and other places around the District. In other words, Jason is building self-esteem.

When his students need individual attention, Jason is always there to support them, interestingly enough, even after they've left the school. I suspect this is some of your—some of you all share the same experience. When one of his former students was preparing for the SAT, Jason studied with him three times a week for 10 weeks. Isn't that interesting? The guy got a 1300 on the test. He now goes to Morehouse College in Atlanta. He's majoring in electrical engineering. He is the first person in his family to go to college.

He says, "I owe most of my success to Mr. Kamras. I do not know where I would be without him. He's more than a teacher to me. He is a true friend." Gosh, it must make you feel good as teachers to have somebody say, "You made a lot of difference in my life. You are a true friend."

Today America expresses its appreciation to Jason and to every one of our outstanding State Teachers of the Year. You give our young people the benefit of your knowledge, your support, your friendship. Your students are fortunate, really fortunate, to have you in their lives. And our Nation is fortunate to have you guiding the next generation of Americans.

God bless you all for your hard work. God bless your families as well. It is my honor to introduce the 2005 National Teacher of the Year, Jason Kamras.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:10 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Anthony A. Williams of the District of Columbia; and District of Columbia Councilmember Carol Schwartz. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and Mr. Kamras.

Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Legislative Conference

April 20, 2005

Thank you all. Thank you all for the warm welcome. Please be seated. Thank you. Thank you, Al, for your kind introduction. I've had this good man by my side for quite a while. When I was the Governor of Texas, we worked together. [*Applause*] There you go. [*Laughter*] And now as the President of these United States, I'm proud to serve with Al Gonzales as our Attorney General.

I want to thank you for allowing me to come and speak to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. It's an honor to be here. I see a lot of friends—I was going to say a lot of old friends, but—[*laughter*]—some of you are younger than I am.

I appreciate your hard work and your commitment to the entrepreneurial spirit of America. You know, one of the great things about our country is, the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. The dream of owning your own business is alive. The willingness for people to take risk is an important part of our society, and as a result, small businesses are being created throughout all our society, and the job base is increasing as a result.

I look forward to working with you the next 4 years to keep the prosperity of our country going. We share a common goal to make sure the American Dream is available for all. *El Sueno Americano es para todos.* [*Laughter*] This is the land of opportunity, and it must remain the land of opportunity, where our origins matter less than our aspirations. And this country's success depends not on accident of birth but on personal effort and drive and determination. And so I'll continue to work with you to create a society where personal effort is rewarded and opportunity is within the reach of every one of our citizens.

In order to make sure opportunity is within the reach of every one of our citizens, we've got to have an economy that continues to

grow and expand. Today I have come to talk about ways to make sure our economy continues to grow and expand, with special emphasis on an energy policy. To create jobs and prosperity in a new century, energy must be abundant and affordable for all our citizens. That means we've got to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

I appreciate Hector Barreto joining us today. He's been the Administrator of the Small Business Administration. Thanks for your good work. I want to thank the leadership of the Chamber. Thank you all for having me. I appreciate the chance to come and talk about a really important part of making sure America stays competitive and jobs continue to grow, and that's a sound energy policy. I want to thank the members of the Hispanic Chamber for allowing me and Al to come by to say hello.

You see, one of the things I do want to share with you is we've got an ambitious agenda to keep the country safe and prosperous and free. The war on terror continues. We're still at war. There is an enemy that still would like to harm America, an enemy which hates what we stand for. I can assure you that this administration will be relentless, untiring in our efforts to bring the enemy to justice. We will work with our friends and allies to keep the pressure on these people. Our most important job in America is to keep this country secure, and that's exactly what we'll work hard to do.

I'll work with Al and other members of my Cabinet to make sure that we do everything we can to improve the security at home. But I want you to know what I think. I think in the long run, the best way to protect America, the best way to spread the peace, the best way to leave a legacy for our children and grandchildren is to spread freedom around the world. I do not believe freedom is America's gift to the world. You've just got to know that about our foreign policy. I do believe that freedom is a gift from the Almighty to each person in this world. And I know that free societies will be peaceful societies.

At home, we'll continue to pursue progrowth economic policies so that America is the best place in the world to risk capital and do business. Listen, we have faced a lot; you know it just as well as I have. You have been on the frontlines of job creation. You understand what this economy has been through. We've been through a stock market decline. We have been through corporate scandals. We've been through a terrorist attack. We've been through a recession and an ongoing war. But we have confronted the challenges head-on. This economy of ours today is the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation. Economists see solid growth for the years ahead, and that's positive.

I don't know if you know this or not, but we've now added more than 3 million jobs over the past 22 months. Today, more Americans are working than any time in our Nation's history. The unemployment rate amongst Hispanics has dropped to 5.7 percent—a figure still too high, but that is down from 8.4 percent over the past 2 years. Today, more Hispanics own their own homes than ever before in our Nation's history. The Small Business Administration is lending to Hispanic-owned companies a lot. The lending has nearly doubled since I took office in 2001. The thing about the Hispanic community that I know well—I was taught this by a lot of my friends in Texas—is that the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in the Latino community. There are a lot of great businessowners and risktakers, people who know what they're doing when it comes to running a business and creating jobs.

And so one of the things that you must ask about people in Washington, DC: One is, do you understand that; and two, if you do, how are you going to make sure opportunity continues to grow? What are you going to do to make sure that our economy is strong today and strong tomorrow? It's hard to be a successful entrepreneur if the economy is in the doldrums.

So here are some ideas that I want Congress to listen to. One, in order to help small businesses, Hispanic small businesses grow, we've got to make sure small businesses are allowed to pool risk, come together and to join in associations across jurisdictional boundaries, so small businesses can buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses are able to do.

Senator Jim Talent from Missouri, who is one of the leading advocates of association health plans, plans that will enable small businesses to better afford health care, was to be here; he got called away for a vote. I excuse him—[*laughter*]—so long as he votes the right way. [*Laughter*]

Many small businesses are organized as Subchapter S corporations or limited partnerships and therefore pay tax—income tax on the personal scales—personal income tax scales. So when we reduce personal income taxes, we reduce the taxes on many Latino-owned businesses around the country. And in order to make sure this economy continues to grow, we have got to keep taxes low on the job creators of America.

We'll continue to work to protect small business from needless regulation and from the burden of junk lawsuits. We need an immigration reform plan that does not grant amnesty but does match willing foreign workers with willing American employers when no Americans can be found to fill the job.

We need to continue to knock down trade barriers across the world so we can open up new markets for America's entrepreneurs. To create jobs and to strengthen democracy in our hemisphere, the Congress needs to pass the Central American Free Trade Agreement.

To guarantee Americans a secure and dignified retirement—I'm talking about younger Americans, not baby boomers like me and you; we're fine when it comes to Social Security—but to make sure that younger Americans aren't saddled with enormous tax burdens, to make sure that there is—that unfunded liabilities don't loom over the capital markets, we need to modernize the Social Security system for our children and our grandchildren.

As we grow the economy, we need to be responsible stewards with your tax—with your money, see. And that's why I submitted a disciplined Federal budget. Both the House and the Senate have passed budget resolutions. Congress needs to get together and iron out their differences and sends me a budget that meets priorities, restrains Federal spending, and keeps us on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009.

Here's what I think—and I think it makes sense; as taxpayers, you should think it makes sense—a taxpayer dollar must be spent wisely or not at all.

To keep this economy growing, we need to ensure our Nation has an affordable, reliable, and secure supply of energy. Today, millions of American families and small businesses are hurting because of higher gasoline prices. If you're trying to meet a payroll or trying to meet a family budget, you know that even small changes at the pump can have a big impact on your bottom line. If you're a businessowner who has to make the choice between adding a new worker or paying a higher energy bill, you're going to be doing a lot less hiring.

Last week, I had the honor of paying tribute to some of our troops in Fort Hood, Texas. I sat down at a table with a bunch of the enlisted personnel, and we were talking about what's on their mind. A guy said, "Why don't you lower gasoline prices, Mr. President?" [*Laughter*] I said, "I wish I could. I wish I could simply wave a magic wand and lower gas prices tomorrow. I'd do that." Unfortunately, higher gas prices are a problem that has been years in the making. One of the things we can do to try to help in the immediate term: We can encourage oil-producing countries to maximize their production overseas; we can make sure consumers are treated fairly, that there's not price gouging. But we must act now to address the fundamental problem. Our supply of energy is not growing fast enough to meet the demands of our growing economy.

Over the past decade, America's energy consumption has increased by more than 12 percent, yet our domestic production has increased by less than one-half of 1 percent. That means that our Nation is more and more reliant on foreign sources of energy. At the same time, the global demand for energy is growing faster than the global supply, which has contributed to a steep rise in the price of crude oil, which is the feedstock for gasoline. Because our foreign energy dependence is growing, our ability to take actions at home that will lower prices for American families is diminishing. Our dependence on foreign energy is like a foreign tax on the American Dream, a tax our citizens pay every

day in higher gas prices, higher cost to heat and cool their homes, a tax on jobs. Worst of all, it's a tax increasing every year.

For the sake of American workers and families, we have got to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. It's a matter of economic security, and it's also a matter of national security. When America depends on only a handful of countries for nearly 60 percent of our oil, the danger of major energy disruption grows. Some of you are old enough to remember the seventies, when we rationed gasoline. The President of the United States and Congress have a responsibility to make sure America never returns to those days, and we've got to meet that responsibility.

Here in Washington, we have got to meet the responsibilities before us and not duck behind partisan politics. And the problem is clear. This problem didn't develop overnight, by the way, and it's not going to be fixed overnight. But this problem—to solve the problem, the Nation has got to make a decision. Members of Congress must decide: Do we want to continue growing more dependent on other nations to meet our energy needs, or do we want to take the necessary steps to achieve greater control of our economic destiny? Those are the questions before us.

I have my opinion. I believe America should not live at the mercy of global trends and the decisions of other nations. For more than a decade, this country has not had a comprehensive national energy policy, and now is the time to change it.

That's why one of the first things I did when I came to office 4 years ago was to develop a national energy strategy. My first month in office, I sent Congress a plan to put America on the path to greater energy security. For 4 years, Congress has discussed and debated, but they haven't achieved any results. Today Members of Congress began debating an energy bill, and this time they need to give us one. The summer travel season is fast approaching. Gas prices are on the minds of millions of Americans. Members of Congress can send an important signal that they are serious about solving America's energy problems by getting a bill to my desk before the summer recess.

The Congress needs to send a sound energy bill that meets four important objectives. First, the energy bill should encourage the use of technology to improve conservation and efficiency. Today, the average American home loses between 10 to 50 percent of its energy through inadequate insulation and inefficient lights and appliances. Think about that: We lose 10 to 50 percent of its energy through inefficiencies.

The energy bill Congress is now considering would extend the Energy Star program that encourages the sale and production of energy-efficient products like super-efficient refrigerators that use less energy than a 75-watt light bulb. It would encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy research that would one day lead to zero-energy homes that produce as much energy as they consume.

If we want to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy, we've got to conserve better. And we know from experience we can do this. Over the last 25 years, our economy has grown by 110 percent, while our energy consumption has grown by only 24 percent. We have become more efficient as a nation, and there's more we can do. And the bill in front of Congress encourages conservation and efficient use of energy.

Secondly, as we promote conservation, the energy bill must also expand domestic energy production in environmentally sensitive ways. We have the most innovative economy in the world. America must put its innovative spirit to work to make sure we can find and use resources in a better way. And we can begin by making sure we can use our most abundant energy source in a smart way.

Our most abundant energy source is coal. We have enough coal to last for 250 years, yet coal also presents an environmental challenge. The energy bill now being considered before Congress would help us make cleaner use of this resource by authorizing more than a billion dollars for the Clean Coal Power Initiative, a program that will encourage new technologies that remove virtually all pollutants from coal-fired powerplants.

To achieve greater energy security, we have got to harness the power of clean coal. We should also open up new areas to environmentally responsible exploration for oil

and natural gas, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Department of Interior estimates that we could recover more than 10 billion barrels of oil from a small corner of ANWR that was reserved specifically for energy development. ANWR consists of 19 million acres of land. Technology now makes it possible to reach ANWR's hydrocarbons by drilling on just 2,000 acres of the 19 million acres of land. That's just one-tenth of 1 percent of ANWR's total area. And we can reach ANWR's oil deposits with almost no impact on land and local wildlife. It's important for our citizens to understand how much technology has changed. Developing this tiny section of ANWR could eventually yield up to a million barrels of oil a day. Do you realize that that's more than half of what we import each day from Venezuela, for example? The more oil we can produce at home in environmentally sensitive ways, the less dependent we are on foreign sources of energy.

With oil at more than $50 a barrel, by the way, energy companies do not need taxpayers-funded incentives to explore for oil and gas. To expand domestic energy production, we need to expand our use of nuclear power. Today, nuclear power provides about 20 percent of our Nation's electricity. It produces without pollution or greenhouse gases. Congress needs to send me an energy bill. If we're serious about diversifying away from foreign sources of energy, Congress needs to send me a bill that includes liability protection and regulatory certainty for nuclear powerplants.

Third, as we increase domestic production of existing resources, an energy bill should also help us diversify our Nation's energy supply by developing alternative sources of energy. If future generations can count on energy in different forms, they're going to be less vulnerable to price spikes or shifts in supply of any one form of energy.

The energy bill should encourage greater use of ethanol. And I like the idea of people growing corn that gets converted into energy. Somebody walks into the Oval Office and says, "There's a lot of corn being grown, Mr. President." Hopefully, that one day will mean we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy. The more corn there is, the more we have to eat. The more corn there is; the more energy there is. And so the bill includes monies for research to make sure we use ethanol. Incredibly enough, we may be able to get ethanol from municipal waste dumps or forests.

In our budget, we've got $2.5 billion in tax credits for the purchase of hybrid vehicles. In other words, we're beginning to diversify away from old habits. Hybrid vehicles are a part of becoming less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

An energy bill should also help advance another vital project, the project I outlined in the State of the Union Address, the hydrogen fuel initiative. Two years ago, we launched a crash program to develop hydrogen-powered fuel cell vehicles. We've dedicated $1.2 billion over 5 years to this effort. We know that when hydrogen is used in a fuel cell, it has the potential to power anything from a car to a cell phone to a computer, that emits pure water instead of exhaust fumes.

The energy bill, if they get it to my desk, will authorize vital funds to help move hydrogen-powered cars from the research lab to the dealership lot. With investment now, we can make it possible for today's children to take their driver's test in a completely pollution-free car.

An energy bill should also provide tax credits for renewable power sources such as wind and landfill gas. By harnessing innovative technologies, we can ensure a cheaper, cleaner, more abundant supply of energy for all Americans.

Fourth, as we diversify our energy supply, we need an energy bill that will help us modernize our domestic energy infrastructure. In some parts of the country, homes and businesses are receiving 21st century power through infrastructure built decades ago. Transmission lines and pipelines and generating facilities are deteriorating here in America. Different regions share electricity over unreliable transmission lines. And these strains on the system are leading to higher prices, bottlenecks in delivery, and inefficient use of energy, which we can no longer afford. And just when one piece of the power grid fails, the result can be darkness across the map, as we learned a couple of years ago.

And that hurts small businesses. It makes it harder to risk capital. It affects job creation. The problems can be solved. Congress needs to act.

Current law makes it optional, rather than mandatory, for power companies to ensure reliability across the electricity grid. Most of you consider it mandatory for a light to come on when you flip the switch. The Congress should too. [*Laughter*] An energy bill should repeal outdated rules that discourage investment in new power infrastructure, should encourage the development of new technologies such as super-conductive power lines to make the grid more efficient. In other words, we're dealing with old laws that need to be changed and modernized for the sake of job creation and job growth.

And to keep local disputes from causing national problems, Federal officials should have the authority to site new power lines. We have modern interstate grids for our phone lines and highways. It's time for America to save energy by building a modern electricity grid as well.

The energy bill now before Congress contains the elements of the strategy I just outlined. But it's 4 years behind schedule, and now it's time for Congress to pass it. I met yesterday with leaders from both parties who are going to shepherd the energy bill through the House and the Senate. I appreciated the bipartisan discussion we had. I appreciated the spirit of trying to get something done. I urged the House and the Senate to get the bill by August. I also told them that we would help them work out differences, come up with reasonable compromises on an issue such as MTBE. In other words, I said I understand how important it is to get this moving, and so does Congress need to understand how important it is to get this bill moving.

All measures that I've discussed with you today are designed with one overriding goal, to address the root causes of higher energy prices and to address our dependency upon foreign sources of energy.

We're in a situation today because for more than a decade, our Nation has not had a comprehensive energy strategy. And we need one now, and passing the bill is the first step. An energy bill wouldn't change the price at the pump today. I know that, and you know that. It will help us make better use of the energy supplies we have. It will make our supply of energy more affordable and more secure for the future.

I've set big goals for this policy; I understand that. You think about how comprehensive the strategy is I outlined to you. There's a lot we can and will do, and I'm confident we can meet those goals. History has shown us the American innovative spirit is never in short supply. And I know we can harness this spirit in this new century. What I'm talking about is making sure that we leave our children and grandchildren a cleaner, healthier, and more secure America, an America that is less dependent on sources of energy from overseas.

And to achieve these goals, I'm going to need your help. As you work the Halls of Congress—and I know you're pretty darn good at it—[*laughter*]—I would like very much for you to visit with the Congress and urge them to get an energy bill passed, urge them to rise above the kind of partisan bickering that sometimes dominates Capitol Hill and focus on this country's interests. And it is in this interest to get me an energy bill I can sign by August of this year.

Thank you for giving me a chance to come by to visit with you. *Que Dios los bendiga.* Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:11 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Signing the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act of 2005

April 20, 2005

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome. Thank you very much for coming today. Today we take an important action to strengthen—to continue strengthening our Nation's economy. The bipartisan bill I'm about to sign makes commonsense reforms to our bankruptcy laws. By restoring integrity to the bankruptcy process, this law will make our financial system stronger and better. By

making the system fairer for creditors and debtors, we will ensure that more Americans can get access to affordable credit.

I'm pleased to be joined today by the Attorney General Al Gonzales. I want to thank the bill sponsors in the House and the Senate. Senator Chuck Grassley of the Senate—I think you told me you'd been working on this bill for 9 years. That's a long time. [*Laughter*] I appreciate Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner from the House for being the sponsor in the House. Thank you.

I want to thank the Speaker. Yesterday, the Speaker and I, by the way, had the honor of opening the Lincoln Library in Springfield, Illinois. I know he'd be pleased to hear me say, "If you're looking for something to do this summer"—[*laughter*].

I thank Senator Mitch McConnell, Senator Orrin Hatch, Senator Jeff Sessions, and Senator Tom Carper. I appreciate the Members of the House who are here, Mike Oxley, Rick Boucher, Bob Goodlatte, Steve Chabot. Thank you all for coming, and thanks for working on this piece of legislation.

Our bankruptcy laws are an important part of the safety net of America. They give those who cannot pay their debts a fresh start. Yet bankruptcy should always be a last resort in our legal system. If someone does not pay his or her debts, the rest of society ends up paying them. In recent years, too many people have abused the bankruptcy laws. They've walked away from debts even when they had the ability to repay them. This has made credit less affordable and less accessible, especially for low-income workers who already face financial obstacles.

The bill I sign today helps address this problem. Under the new law, Americans who have the ability to pay will be required to pay back at least a portion of their debts. Those who fall behind their State's median income will not be required to pay back their debts. This practical reform will help ensure that debtors make a good-faith effort to repay as much as they can afford. This new law will help make credit more affordable, because when bankruptcy is less common, credit can be extended to more people at better rates.

The new law will also require credit card companies to let card holders know up front what they are expected to pay and what the penalties they will face if they are late on a payment. When people get a credit card, they should not be trapped by a provision in the fine print.

To make the system more fair, the new law will also make it more difficult for serial filers to abuse the most generous bankruptcy protections. Debtors seeking to erase all debts will now have to wait 8 years from their last bankruptcy before they can file again. The law will also allow us to clamp down on bankruptcy mills that make their money by advising abusers on how to game the system.

America is a nation of personal responsibility, where people are expected to meet their obligations. We're also a nation of fairness and compassion where those who need it most are afforded a fresh start. The act of Congress I sign today will protect those who legitimately need help, stop those who try to commit fraud, and bring greater stability and fairness to our financial system. I'm honored to join the Members of Congress to sign the Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. S. 256, approved April 20, was assigned Public Law No. 109–8.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Naval Academy Midshipmen

April 20, 2005

Thank you. Please be seated. Welcome to the Rose Garden. It is my honor to welcome the Midshipmen of the United States Naval Academy back here again. Coach Johnson told me last year—he said, "Don't worry about it, Mr. President, we'll be back." [*Laughter*] I like a man who keeps his word. [*Laughter*]

The football rivalry of our military academies is one of the great American sports traditions. Once again, the Midshipmen set a standard of excellence on the field. This team is tough; it is talented; and you knew how to win. You whipped the Air Force

Academy in the field goal in the last minute. I was there when you beat Army. [*Laughter*] And you won the Commander in Chief Trophy again.

I want to thank our guests who are here. A Member of the United States Senate is on his way who is a huge Naval Academy supporter, and that would be Senator John McCain. He will be here soon. I appreciate Mike McIntyre from North Carolina joining us. Congressman, thank you for being here. I appreciate Michael Steele, the Lieutenant Governor from Maryland. I appreciate Gordon England, who's the Secretary of the Navy, soon to be, upon Senate confirmation, the Deputy Secretary of Defense. We're glad you're here, sir. And I appreciate Vice Admiral Rod Rempt for your hospitality at the games.

Coach Johnson, welcome back. Congratulations on the award you have won. There's nothing like a good team to make you look good. [*Laughter*]

This team will be well-represented in the Navy record books. You won more games than any Navy team in 99 years. That's a long time. [*Laughter*] The last time a team of Midshipmen won 10 games, the Commander in Chief was Theodore Roosevelt, who, by the way, built the West Wing. You finished the season ranked number 24 in the polls. The last time that happened, that you were in the top 25, was 1979. None of the players on this team had been born then. You earned a trip to the Emerald Bowl in San Francisco, and you beat New Mexico for your first bowl victory in 9 years.

You also set—Senator John McCain. Thank you, sir. Thanks for coming. The thing McCain loved about the Naval Academy was he got to study all the time. [*Laughter*] He and I have both showed that if you—people with C averages can succeed. [*Laughter*] Welcome.

The interesting thing about the football game at the Emerald Bowl was this—I happened to watch it—it was the drive that lasted 14 minutes and 26 plays—like he kind of redefined the definition of ball control. The team was a source of pride for the brigade of Midshipmen and for Navy fans everywhere. The seniors on this team led one of the most dramatic improvements in college football history. Navy went 0 and 10 during your plebe year, and 10 and 2 this year.

I'd like for the record to show that your turnaround started the year I delivered the commencement. [*Laughter*] I'm not, like, taking any credit for it. But I do appreciate the invitation to come back, and I'm looking forward to giving the commencement address this year at the Naval Academy.

You've inspired fans everywhere, so much so that Josh Smith's hometown radio broadcast the Navy games. And by the way, that radio—that hometown is in Indiana.

The lessons you learned on the football field will prepare you for helping us win the war on terror. Midshipmen, you've developed leadership, teamwork, and strong character. You know the importance of setting high standards, and you know the importance of training hard to meet those standards. All these qualities will serve our Nation well as you become commissioned officers in the finest military the world has ever known.

We are still at war, and many of your former teammates are serving and sacrificing at this very hour. Marines and sailors are leading vital missions in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere. They're interdicting shipments of deadly weapons. They're maintaining America's command of the seas. You're helping to protect this country, and the citizens of America are grateful.

We've lost some of our finest men and women in the war on terror, including several former Navy football players. Our Nation will always honor their sacrifice. The American people are safer and the world will be more peaceful because of the honor and courage and commitment of the United States Navy and Marine Corps.

I thank you all for volunteering to serve in a cause greater than yourself. I'm proud of what you have achieved on the football field. I am confident that your service will bring even greater achievements in the years ahead. It's an honor to be the Commander in Chief of such a fine group of people.

Congratulations again on winning the football trophy, the Commander in Chief Trophy. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:43 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Johnson, head coach, and Josh Smith, safety, U.S. Naval Academy football team; and Vice Adm. Rodney P. Rempt, USN, superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy.

Proclamation 7889—National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2005

April 20, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Physical fitness is vital to a healthy lifestyle. During National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, we highlight the importance of integrating exercise into our daily routines and encourage all our citizens to live more active lives.

Physical fitness benefits both the body and the mind. Regular exercise, along with healthy eating habits, helps prevent serious health problems, improves productivity, and promotes better sleep and relaxation. Maintaining an active lifestyle reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, asthma, heart disease, and certain cancers. Americans can improve their health and well-being by dedicating a small part of each day to physical activity.

As children grow, athletic activities teach them important life lessons and help prepare them for the opportunities ahead. Sports are a way for young Americans to meet new friends, discover the value of teamwork, discipline, and patience, and learn to win and lose with respect for others. From baseball to mountain biking to swimming, sports and physical activities can be a great chance to get outdoors and enjoy memorable experiences with family and friends.

Through the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, my Administration is promoting the incorporation of physical activity into daily life and the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The Council's website, www.fitness.gov, provides information on steps individuals can take to live better and more productive lives. Programs like "The President's Challenge" help individuals set fitness goals and work hard to achieve them.

I urge all Americans to set aside time to improve their health through physical fitness and sports, and I encourage individuals to help motivate their family and friends to get out and exercise. By contributing to a culture of health and well-being in America, citizens help demonstrate the strength and character of our great country.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 2005 as National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. I call upon the people of the United States to make daily physical activity a priority in their lives and to recognize the numerous benefits of an active lifestyle. I also call on all Americans to celebrate this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:40 a.m., April 21, 2005]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 22.

Remarks to the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America Legislative Conference

April 21, 2005

Good morning. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's a little early for the Texas delegation. [*Laughter*] I hope you're behaving yourselves. I know you are, since Billy Gammon isn't here. [*Laughter*] I am pleased to be with the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America. Thanks.

Laura told me on the way over to give you all her best. Generally what happens when I mention her name, most people say, "Well, I wish you'd have sent her." [*Laughter*] She's doing great. She is a—really a fine person, a great mother, great wife, and a great First

Lady for America. I'm a really lucky guy when she said yes when I asked her to marry me.

I really appreciate your inviting me, and I appreciate your work. I appreciate the way more than 300,000 of you around America help our fellow citizens—help our fellow citizens protect their property, help our fellow citizens provide for their families in case of calamity. Thanks for what you do. Thanks for being good stewards within the communities in which you live.

I oftentimes tell people that the great strength of America is not our military, although we'll keep it strong. The great strength of America is not the size of our wallets. The great strength of America is the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens who work in the communities in which they live to feed the hungry, provide hope for the hopeless, provide shelter for the homeless, who love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. I know that's what you all do on a daily basis in the community in which you live, and thank you for making America a better place.

I welcome you to the Nation's Capital, where sometimes politics gets in the way of doing the people's business. Take John Bolton—he's a good man I nominated to represent our country at the United Nations. John's distinguished career and service to our Nation demonstrates that he is the right man at the right time for this important assignment. I urge the Senate to put aside politics and confirm John Bolton to the United Nations.

Politics in Washington has also made it hard for some to put aside their differences to come to the table to strengthen Social Security. And that's what I'm here to talk about today. I want to spend some time with you talking about the fact that Social Security is headed for deep trouble and that those of us who have been entrusted by the people to serve our country need to act now to make sure the Social Security system is there for our children and our grandchildren.

I want to thank Bob Rusbuldt for giving me a chance to come. I appreciate the invitation. I want to thank Tom Grau for his leadership role as well. But most of all, thank you all for your interest.

The men and women of the Big "I"—I think that's what you call yourselves—[*laughter*]—appreciate the principles that are important for a healthy and strong America. And I appreciate the principles that you stand for, planning for the future and providing Americans with more choices and working to get your friends and clients a better deal. I appreciate your commitment to standing with your clients until their claims are settled, to help people through the rough spots. You're ensuring the American Dream, and I appreciate that as well.

By protecting homes and the savings of millions of families, you're helping this Nation be more secure for a lot of folks. And that's what I'm interested in. I'm interested in a secure nation. I'm working to make sure this Nation is a prosperous nation. And we're working hard to spread freedom and the peace we all want.

We have an ambitious agenda here in Washington. There is a lot to do. The war on terror goes on. We're still at war. There is still a ruthless enemy that would like to harm our country. They want to do us harm because of what we believe. We stand for freedom and liberty and human dignity and the rights of minorities, the right for people to worship freely. And we're not going to change. And they don't like it. But we're going to keep pressure on them. We'll work with friends and allies. We will be unrelenting in our efforts to bring the terrorists to justice, and we will not rest until America is safe.

In the long run, the best way to protect America is to change the conditions that give rise to hopelessness and extremism. That's the best way to protect generations of Americans to come. And the best way to change the conditions that give rise to hopelessness and extremism is to spread freedom.

I oftentimes tell audiences this—and it's important for our fellow citizens and people around the world to hear this—that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. I believe all people desire to be free. I believe moms in the Middle East want their children to grow up in a peaceful world so their children can have—can realize their God-given potential. That's

what I believe. And if you believe that, then you have an obligation to help spread that freedom. And freedom is on the march.

Incredibly exciting times to live in, when you think about what has taken place in a relatively quick period of time. The other day at the Lincoln Library opening in Springfield—and if you're here from Springfield or Illinois, you've got yourself a heck of a library. [*Applause*] You know what I'm talking about. Well, you don't know yet. Go see it, and then you'll know what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*] I said sometimes freedom moves slowly, like water cutting through a rock. I said but sometimes, when people see the example of courage, freedom moves like a wildfire.

Think about what's happened in a quick period of time. Afghanistan is free. Millions of people voted for a President, in spite of the fact that only a short time before that, they were under the brutal control of the Taliban. Or in Ukraine, when people went to the streets to demand free and fair elections—or Kyrgyzstan or in Lebanon. By the way, our message is very clear to Syria: Take out all your troops; take out all your intelligence services; and give the good people of Lebanon a chance to have free and fair elections.

The world saw the courage of those who have freedom etched in their soul in Iraq, courage of over 8 million citizens who are willing to defy terrorists and killers and car bombers, to say with a message that resonated around the world, "We want to be free. We're willing to take risks to vote." A free Iraq is important to America's security, is important for generations of Americans to come to have an ally in the war on terror, like Iraq. Today, the people of Iraq decide the fate of their Government and not the other way around.

I look forward to working with the new Government of Iraq. I look forward to working with those who have been chosen by the people to meet the challenges that this country faces. As Iraqis stand up for their freedom, this country will stand with the people of a free Iraq. As a new Government assumes increasing responsibility for their country, security operations are entering into a new phase. Iraqi security forces are becoming more self-reliant; they're becoming better at what they do. They're taking on greater responsibilities, and that means America and its coalition partners are increasingly playing a more supportive role.

Today—I don't know if you realize this or not—over 150,000 Iraqi security forces have been trained or equipped. For the first time, the Iraqi army, police, and security forces now outnumber U.S. forces in Iraq. We're working on establishing chains of command. We're working to make sure civilian government understands that there needs to be stability in the security forces. Like free people everywhere, Iraqis want to be defended and led by their own countrymen. That's easy to understand that thought and desire. And that's what we want. That's the strategy of the United States. And so we'll help them achieve this objective so they can secure their own nation. And when they're ready and equipped, our troops will come home with the honor they have earned.

We've got a lot of work to do to spread freedom abroad, and we've got work to do to pursue progrowth economic policies here at home. And our goal is pretty clear: We want America to be the best place in the world to do business. That's what we want. We want it to be the best place to risk capital. We've overcome a lot. We've overcome a recession and a terrorist attack and corporate scandals and war. But our economy is growing.

Let me tell you what I think we need to do to continue to grow our economy so people can realize their dreams. First, one of the heaviest burdens on business is the litigations costs in America. Recently I was proud to sign the Class Action Fairness Act, a good piece of legislation. It was a critical first step toward ending the lawsuit culture in our country. Class-action reform succeeded because members of both parties saw a serious problem and joined together. That's a hopeful accomplishment in a town too often bitterly divided because of politics. And so my message to the Congress is: Stay focused on what you can do. Now we can do more work on—when it comes to legal reform.

We need to take action on asbestos legal reform. We need to make sure health care is available and affordable, and one of the

ways to make sure health care is available and affordable is to do something about the junk lawsuits that are running good doctors out of practice.

You know, when I first came to Washington, I thought medical liability reform would—could best be handled at the State level, until I realized what the cost of the defensive practice of medicine, the cost of settling lawsuits, the rising costs of premiums do to the Federal budget. I mean, if you think about the cost in the Federal budget and the cost of frivolous lawsuits in the Federal budget, you begin to recognize why I think it's now a national problem.

Listen, we pay for Medicare; we pay for Medicaid; we pay for veterans' health benefits. All those costs are affected by junk lawsuits. Medical liability reform is a national problem that requires a national solution. And now is the time for the United States Senate to listen to doctors and patients and concerned citizens, not to the powerful trial lawyer lobby, and get me a medical liability bill.

I also understand the importance of small business in creating jobs in our country. That's why I worked with Congress to help reinvigorate our economy, to help strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit by enacting the largest tax relief in a generation. It's important to have certainty in the Tax Code. Congress must understand that. And that's why I've been urging to make sure that Congress makes the tax relief we passed permanent.

Today, in large part to small businesses such as—like yours, more than 3 million new jobs have been added to our economy since May of 2003. Today, more workers—more Americans are working than ever before in our Nation's history. I applaud the House of Representatives for taking the side of small businesses last week for voting to repeal the death tax. The death tax results in unfair double taxation. They tax your assets while you're alive; then they tax your assets when you're dead. [*Laughter*] I believe we ought to bury the death tax forever. By doing so, it will inject vital life into the small-business community; it will increase fairness in the Tax Code; it will help promote economic security. The Senate—the Senate needs to join the House in repealing the death tax forever.

I want to spend a little time with you on Social Security. You know, I know this is one of these issues that some wish I hadn't have brought up in Washington. It's one of these issues that I suspect some of them are really saying, "Gosh, I wish the President hadn't decided to take this issue on." I campaigned on the issue. I said to the American people, "If you give me a chance to serve, I will bring this issue to focus." That's what I said in campaign stop after campaign stop, "Just give me a chance, and I'm going to talk about reforming the Social Security system." I'm confident Members of Congress, when they really think about that, will say, "Gosh, it's good to have a President who does in office what he said he would do on the campaign trail."

I also believe it is my duty and my obligation as your President to confront problems now and not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. That's why I've traveled the last few weeks to over 22—to 22 States, talking about Social Security. I mean, I have a strategy. First, I want to lay out to the American people we have a problem, because I believe once the American people hear the problem, they're going to then say to those of us who have been elected, "What you going to do about it?" So I'm going to spend a lot of time talking about this issue.

You see, I think it's—and the reason why is because I know how important Social Security is to the country. Franklin Roosevelt did a good thing when he created the Social Security system in 1935. I'm sure you've got relatives who depend upon the Social Security check. I meet people all the time in our country who say, "You've got to understand, Mr. President, how important that check is to me." There's a lot of folks in this country who count upon that check when it arrives. In other words, the system has provided an important safety net for a lot of our fellow citizens.

And so the seniors who receive their checks must hear this loud and clear: Don't fall prey to the propaganda, those who are trying to scare you when there's talk about making sure the Social Security system is modern. If you're receiving a check from Social Security today, you'll receive a check next month and the next month after that and for

every month you're alive. The Federal Government will keep its commitments to the seniors who are relying upon Social Security. If you were born before 1950, you're in good shape with the system as it exists today. You're going to get your check.

The problem is, our Government has made promises to younger Americans that it cannot keep, and that's important for our fellow citizens to know. It's important for them to know that there is a hole in the safety net. The safety net for citizens who retire is in good shape if you've been born before 1950. If you were born after 1950, you better pay attention to the issue.

First, as I travel the country, I find out some people think there's such a thing as a Social Security trust. By that I mean we collect your money through the payroll tax, and we hold your money for you, and then when you retire, we give you your money back. No—[*laughter*]—that's not the way it works. That's what you call a—it was set up as a pay-as-you-go system. In other words, you pay, and we go ahead and spend. [*Laughter*] You pay through payroll taxes, and we spend your payroll taxes on making sure we cover the benefits of the retirees. And with the money leftover, like there's money leftover now, we spend it on other Government programs. So instead of having a trust, we have a pay-as-you-go system, and that which exists in the system is a filing cabinet, or a series of filing cabinets, full of IOUs. In other words, we've got paper.

And the reason I bring this up to you is that it's really important for our citizens to understand how the system works, first and foremost. In other words, when you're talking about strengthening and modernizing, you've got to understand that all that is left over in the system today is paper.

This pay-as-you-go system worked just fine for a while. In 1950, there were 16 workers paying taxes for each beneficiary. That's not a very heavy load for a worker to pay one-sixteenth of the promise to the beneficiary. Today, there's 3.3 workers per beneficiary. By the time our children and grandchildren retire, there will be 2 workers for every beneficiary. So you're beginning to see, the math is changing for Social Security—fewer people paying in the pay-as-you-go system per beneficiary, but that is only part of the problem.

To compound the problem, baby boomers like me and a lot of you will be eligible to retire in 4 years. See, I'm turning 62 in 4 years. It's a convenient time, 4 years for me to retire. [*Laughter*] The retirement of baby boomers will have a huge impact on the pay-as-you-go Social Security system. And here's why: My generation is about 50 percent larger than my parents' generation. Today, there are about 40 million retirees receiving benefits. By the time all the baby boomers have retired, there will be more than 72 million retirees receiving benefits.

We're going to be living longer too. Medicine has changed to help us live longer. A lot of us are exercising a lot. I would strongly urge exercise if you want to live longer and make right choices for what you put in your body. But we're living longer than the previous generation.

And the problem even gets further magnified because Congress has made sure benefits to my generation grow faster than the rate of inflation or even the economy. In other words, people who ran for office said, "Vote for me. I'm going to make sure your benefits go up."

So think about what has taken place and what will take place relative to the pay-as-you-go Social Security system. You've got a lot of people retiring who are living longer, who have been promised greater benefits, with fewer people paying into the system. Those are the dynamics that have made this issue a critical issue, particularly for younger generations of Americans coming up.

Social Security system 3 years from now will start heading into the red. In 2017, Social Security will start paying out more in benefits than it collects in payroll taxes—the pay-as-you-go system, money coming in, money going out. More money will be going out than coming in in 2017, and every year thereafter, the situation gets worse. In other words, the cash deficit for that year accelerates. In 2034, the annual shortfall will be more than $300 billion. In 2041, the system will be broke—bankrupt. So we've got a problem coming down the road.

Now, I recognize here in Washington, 2017 may seem like a long way away. It's

not all that far away. That's 12 years from now. If you've got a 6-year-old kid, your kid is going to be voting. If you think that's long, you haven't raised a kid yet. [*Laughter*] It happens just like that. If you're a grandparent, you're going to get your check. But you've got to be wondering about whether or not the burden is going to be so heavy on your grandchildren that the America they grow up in is going to be a country burdened by obligations that a Congress in 2005 was unwilling to confront.

You see, the longer we wait to fix this problem, the more drastic the solutions become. As a matter of fact, the Social Security trustees say every year we wait to fix the system will add an additional $600 billion to the cost of reform. In other words, if this city gets locked down because of politics, that lockdown costs a future generation $600 billion every year. In other words, we've got a serious problem. And the point the trustees make is, "Why don't you fix it now? Why don't you come together to get something done?"

If we wait—in other words, if you say, "Oh, gosh, well, it's too difficult to do," or, "We don't want to make so-and-so look good relative to such-and-such," if we wait, it's conceivable younger workers will have to have a payroll tax of about 18 percent in order to make good on the promises. That's not going to work, folks. If we wait, the benefits promised to a lot of folks are going to have to be slashed dramatically, or other Government programs affected.

So recognizing this problem, I stood up in front of the Congress at the State of the Union and said, "Here's the problem." I also said, "Bring forth your ideas." See, I don't view this as a Republican problem. I don't view it as a Democrat problem. I view it as a national problem that requires people to come forward, say, "Here's my idea," or "Here's another idea." We've had a lot of people starting to come forward.

People have come forward in the past. I was telling President Clinton when I traveled with him to the Pope's funeral—which, by the way, was a magnificent event. It was just unbelievably spiritual and—it was great, in recognition of a great man. But I said, "I remember your—I think it was 1996 townhall meeting in Albuquerque." He probably said, "What are you watching C–SPAN at such a late hour for?" But, anyway—[*laughter*]—and people were encouraged to bring forth ideas on how to permanently solve the Social Security problem. That was in '96.

Former Democrat Congressman Tim Penny has come forth with good ideas. I asked the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York to put together a bipartisan Commission to look at Social Security—this was in 2001. They came forward with a lot of good ideas. There's a Democrat Social Security expert named Robert Pozen who believes we ought to restructure benefits and be more generous to low-income workers. That's a good idea. All ideas are on the table. That's how you get the job done.

And when somebody puts an idea on the table, you can rest assured the White House will not attack them. And that's important for people to hear as well. Now is the time for a civil debate on how to solve this national problem. Now, I do believe the reforms ought to be guided by certain principles: We ought not to raise the payroll tax rate. Social Security must continue to provide dignity and peace of mind for those with lower incomes. That's an important principle for a good retirement system. We've got to make sure that the solution is a permanent solution, by the way, and not a temporary fix.

I really appreciated the spirit in 1983 of President Reagan and Speaker O'Neill and others who said, "We got a problem with Social Security. Let's come together and fix it." That's the kind of spirit that I'm confident will prevail eventually here in Washington. By the way, this is the 22d anniversary of the 75-year fix on Social Security. [*Laughter*] In other words, at the time they said, "We got us a 75-year fix." The problem is, 22 years later we're now talking about, let's make it permanent this time. And so, when Congress debates these issues, it's really important to make sure that we have a permanent fix, that we get it done once and for all.

I'm looking forward to hearing more good ideas as people discuss the issue. By the way, I'm encouraged; I believe we're going to get something done. After all, the United States Senate looked at the issue and passed a resolution that said we ought to fix Social Security

permanently. That's an interesting vote. You had the two Senators from Texas voting "yes" and the two Senators from Massachusetts voting "yes." That's called bipartisanship. [*Laughter*] See, they made it clear; they're on record. Every single United States Senator is on record supporting a permanent fix for Social Security. And now those Senators need to keep their word and make Social Security solvent once and for all.

Bringing permanent solvency to Social Security is an important start, but it's only part of our duty. Preserving Social Security should not mean preserving its problems. Today, we have an opportunity—as we permanently solve Social Security, we have an opportunity to make—to give younger Americans a better deal when it comes to the Social Security system. And I want to spend a little time talking to you about what I mean by that.

See, I think we ought to give every American the opportunity to own assets. I love the concept of spreading ownership throughout America. And I know we've got to give younger Americans the opportunity to tap into the power of compound interest so they have a chance to get a higher rate of return on their own money, on their own assets than the current system allows. Sometimes in Washington, we seem to forget whose money we spend. You see, those payroll taxes, that's not the Government's money. The payroll taxes are the hard-working people's money. And it seems like it makes sense to me to give the hard-working people a chance to earn a better rate of return on their money than the Government does.

And so I think we ought to give younger workers the opportunity to save, in the Social Security system, through what's called a personal retirement account. Essentially, that would be a conservative mix of bonds and stocks that grows over time. Today, the real rate of return in the Social Security for your money is about 1.8 percent. At that rate, it will take you nearly 40 years to double your money. If you put the money in the market and get a 4-percent return, your money will double in about 18 years. If you get the historical market average of 7 percent, your money will double in just over 10 years. That's what's called the miracle of compound interest at work.

We have a fellow with us today named Wright Noll. He's 67 years old. He's married with five children. He spent about 30 years as a schoolteacher and an assistant principal and most of that time in Bend, Oregon. By the way, it's a nice place to live, right? He took what you might call a sabbatical and spent 6 years as a dairy farmer. This guy is a hard-working guy. At one point he held three jobs.

Wright says he paid roughly the same amount of money into both Social Security and the Oregon State pension plan for government employees. Unlike the money Wright put into Social Security, the money he paid into Oregon's plan was saved and invested. As a result, the money in the Oregon plan benefited from the power of compound interest, and he got a better—bigger retirement check. Today, Wright's monthly Social Security check is about $1,152 a month; his monthly check from the Oregon retirement system is nearly $5,400. That's the power of compound interest.

When, he said, he started getting his retirement checks, he went out and bought himself five brand new shirts. [*Laughter*] He said, "I never did that before because, being a schoolteacher with five kids, you have to shop at the used clothing store."

I appreciate you coming, Wright. I appreciate you letting me use you as an example of missed opportunity for a lot of people because of the way the current system is structured. You see, I think we need to give everybody a chance, if they so choose, to put some of their money in a personal savings account, a conservative mix of bonds and stocks, so they can get a better rate of return on their money. It's a voluntary idea. I mean, Government ought to not mandate this idea. But Government ought to say, "We ought to give you the opportunity, give you a chance, if you so desire."

In my proposal to Congress, I said, "Well, why don't you let a person set aside a third of their payroll tax into a personal savings account?" Let me give you what that would mean for a younger worker who earned $35,000 over his or her lifetime. If you allow that person to set aside a third of their payroll taxes with a reasonable rate of growth on their money, that person earning that amount

of money over their lifetime would have a nest egg of about $250,000 upon retirement. That would be a nice addition to other Social Security benefits. It's a part of the retirement plan. That would mean that person would have their own assets. Their asset wouldn't be tied up in a file cabinet in West Virginia. Their asset would be theirs to call their own, an asset they can pass on to a—to whomever they choose, a son or a daughter.

These voluntary accounts would—obviously, you'd have strict guidelines. You couldn't take your money and put it in the lottery. In other words, there's go-bys. There's a—the investment vehicles are conservative in nature. You've got to make sure your—we'll make sure the earnings aren't eaten up by hidden Wall Street fees, make sure there's good options to protect investments from sudden market swings on the eve of retirement. That happens all the time in the financial community, where if a person is getting ready to retire and wants to convert from stocks and bonds to annuities—it happens all the time. You know what I'm talking about; you do it all the time in advising people.

These accounts will offer straightforward investment choices that are easy to understand. And I'm not talking about something new here. This isn't a new invention. In Ohio—if you're from Ohio, you know what I'm talking about—thousands of government employees at the State, county, and local level have personal retirement accounts as part of their retirement system. I just went to South Carolina; all new State employees can choose between their traditional retirement plan and a personal retirement account with a conservative mix of bonds and stocks to deliver a better rate of return for them.

I don't know if you know this or not—Congress knows it—Federal employees, including Members of the United States Congress, have the option of taking some of their money and putting them into a conservative mix of bonds and stocks. They've got the opportunity to do that. Do you know why they gave themselves the opportunity? Because they want to get a better rate of return on their money. I believe if this opportunity to put aside personal savings account—money in a personal savings account is good enough for the United States Congress, it's good enough for working people all across the United States.

Do you know what's really interesting about today's society? Some of you older fellows out there probably didn't spend much time talking about 401(k)s, when we were in our twenties—or IRAs. I mean, the investment world has changed, hasn't it? It really has. I mean, there's a lot of young people who are comfortable with the idea of taking some of their own money and watching it grow. They're used to making decisions about their money. I mean, after all, the world really has changed when it comes to retirement plans and companies trusting people with their own decisionmaking. Offering young workers a 1930's-era retirement system is like trying to persuade them that vinyl LPs are better than iPods. [*Laughter*]

Voluntary personal accounts are a way of bringing Franklin Roosevelt's promises of retirement into the 21st century. Creating accounts will give children and grandchildren a chance to replace a burden of uncertainty with new opportunity. Instead of leaving their full retirement, all their retirement in the hands of future politicians, younger workers will be able to take part of their retirement in their own hands. I like that idea.

Instead of sending their money to Washington so politicians can spend it, younger workers will be able to put part of their money into an account they own that nobody can take away from them. Instead of forfeiting years of Social Security contributions if they die before retirement, which happens in the current system, younger workers would have peace of mind that their personal accounts could be passed on to a loved one.

My administration works hard to spread ownership throughout America. I want more people owning their own home. I want more people owning their own small business. I want more people owning a piece of their retirement, because I know that when a person owns something, they have a vital stake in the future of this country. And ownership should not be confined to just a few people in our society. Owning an asset and being able to pass it on to your son or daughter should not be the purview of a few. In this

great land, ownership ought to be spread to everybody—every single person.

As Wright Noll will tell you, the power of compound interest is important as well. He sees it every month in the checks he gets. Members of Congress need to listen to the people. A lot of people in America now understand we have a problem. A lot of people are sorting through the data. They're listening to the debate. They're hearing all the noise coming out of Washington. But they're hearing we got a problem. I'm going to keep talking about it over and over again because I want the people to understand the stakes of doing nothing.

Older Americans are beginning to hear loud and clear that if you get your check, nothing changes. And that's important for our citizens to hear. I'm sure some of you all have got a mom or a dad wondering what old—"Why is George W. talking about this? I want to make—just tell him, make sure I get my check." [*Laughter*] You'll get your check. You'll get your check.

There are some folks around this town trying to scare you because they don't want to see anything happen. But our citizens who count on Social Security will get their check. Baby boomers like me, we're fixing to retire, and there's a lot of us. This is an important issue for us, but it's really an important issue for your children and grandchildren.

We have an obligation to save and strengthen this important program for generations of Americans to come. And when Congress acts, there will be plenty of credit for everybody involved. And when they do, our children and grandchildren will one day look back and be grateful that our generation made the difficult choices and the necessary choices to renew the great promise of the Social Security system for the 21st century.

Thank you all for giving me a chance to come by.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:24 a.m. at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to William "Billy" Gammon III, president, William Gammon Insurance Agency, Inc.; and Robert A. Rusbuldt, chief executive officer, and Thomas Grau, president, Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, Inc.

Remarks on Presenting the President's Environmental Youth Awards

April 21, 2005

The President. Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. I'm sorry we're not out in the gardens today but a pretty good place to have a visit, anyway, isn't it, the East Room? We're glad you're here. I want to welcome you as we honor some fine young stewards of our environment and to recognize their achievements.

All of you have given your time and energy to preserving our natural spaces. You're setting such a fine example, and we appreciate the example. And today is our chance to tell you how proud we are of your good work.

I want to thank Steve Johnson, who is the Acting Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. I put this good man's nomination in front of the United States Senate for a reason, because he's plenty capable of doing the job, and now is the time for the United States Senate to confirm him. I'm proud that his wife, Debbie, is here, and Matt.

I want to thank my friend Congressman Vito Fossella, who has joined us. Congressman, thank you for being here.

We welcome all the EPA Regional Administrators, particularly those Administrators from the great State of Texas. [*Laughter*]

This week is National Volunteer Week, and we honor the 64 million Americans who volunteer and encourage others to join them. Since taking office, I have asked Americans to take an active role in serving their communities by dedicating 4,000 hours, or 2 years, over the course of their lives to helping others. In order to encourage people to help, I started the USA Freedom Corps, and that's a web site that match potential volunteers with opportunities to volunteer at the local level. And if you want to find out more about the web site, the USA Freedom Corps web site, go to www.usafreedomcorps.gov.

The 30 young men and women we honor here today in the White House answered the call to service. They know they have a responsibility to be citizens, not spectators, and that by serving a cause larger than themselves, communities grow stronger. One of

the greatest responsibilities in a free society is responsible stewardship of our natural environment. All of you have taken that duty seriously. You have set a clear and strong example, and you're inspiring others to do their part.

Tomorrow I'm going to Tennessee, in honor of Earth Day, to help volunteers restore the trails at Cades Cove. I'm looking forward to getting my hands dirty—[*laughter*]—looking forward to getting outside of Washington. [*Laughter*]

As volunteers, you've put your talents to good use. In Cairo, Georgia, you set up a science camp to promote recycling. In St. Paul, Virginia, you helped restore a newly named wetland and made it an outdoor classroom. In Oklahoma and California, you cleaned up debris around local creeks. You built nesting boxes to protect local birds in Staten Island, New York. You improved trout habitats in Hyrum, Utah. You started a project for the Fender's blue butterfly in Salem, Oregon. You spearheaded a public education program to protect a stream near Cleveland, Ohio. You planted a beech tree at an elementary school in Middletown, Rhode Island. And you taught schoolchildren about groundwaters in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Each of these acts touched a community, and together they are improving our Nation. All of you are meeting your responsibility to our country's natural spaces, and our Government is doing the same. America's air and water are cleaner today than they were in 2001. My budget for the coming year fulfills my commitment in 2001 to spend $4.9 billion over 5 years to improve our national parks and to make our parks more inviting and accessible to all Americans.

We're implementing the Clear Skies rule to cut powerplant emissions by 70 percent. Under the farm bill I signed in 2002, we will provide $40 billion over 10 years to help our farmers and ranchers protect wetlands, water quality, and wildlife habitats. I've pledged to restore, improve, and protect 3 million acres of wetlands over the next 5 years. To safeguard our forests and woodlands against fire damage, I've signed the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. And since I took office, the Departments of Interior and Agriculture have removed hazardous fuels from more than 10 million acres of Federal land.

Across America, we're working with State and local governments to accelerate the cleanup and redevelopment of old industrial sites. We're working hard to improve our environment, and so are you. Each of you here today has worked hard. You've been idealistic in the right way, and you've been dedicated. I know your parents are proud of you. Your communities are proud of you, and so is your President.

So it is now my great honor to welcome the 2005 winners of the President's Environmental Youth Awards. The Acting Administrator will do the duties.

[*At this point, Acting Administrator Stephen L. Johnson introduced the award recipients from each region, and the President congratulated them.*]

The President. Listen, thank you all for coming. We're proud to have you here in the White House. I want to welcome and congratulate our students again. I really want to welcome your parents too. You've done a good job. And I want to thank your teachers. Teaching is a noble profession. We hope you enjoy the White House as much as Laura and I do.

God bless you all. Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deborah Johnson, wife of Acting Administrator Johnson of the Environmental Protection Agency, and their son, Matthew Johnson.

Statement on Senate Confirmation of John D. Negroponte as Director of National Intelligence

April 21, 2005

I commend the Senate for moving quickly to confirm John Negroponte as the first Director of National Intelligence. I congratulate John on his confirmation, and I look forward to working closely with him. As the DNI, Ambassador Negroponte will lead a unified intelligence community as it reforms and adapts to the new challenges of the 21st century. The United States continues to make progress in the global war on terror

against the enemies of freedom who target innocent civilians and seek weapons of mass destruction. I appreciate John's willingness to once again serve his country and the many men and women who serve in the intelligence community.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Energy Legislation

April 21, 2005

I commend the House for taking an important step to secure our energy future and to reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. The House energy legislation is largely consistent with the key objectives of my comprehensive national energy policy: increasing conservation and efficiency, expanding domestic production in environmentally responsible ways, diversifying our energy supply with more renewables and clean fuels, and modernizing our energy infrastructure. For more than a decade, our Nation has not had a sensible, balanced, and comprehensive energy strategy. An energy bill will help us make better use of the energy supplies we have and will make our supply of energy more affordable and more secure for the future. I look forward to swift Senate action so that I can sign a bill into law by August.

Statement on Senate Action on Appropriations Legislation for Afghanistan, Iraq, and the War on Terror

April 21, 2005

I applaud the Senate for its strong bipartisan support for our troops and our continued effort to win the war on terror. New democracies are taking root in Iraq and Afghanistan, and America is proud to stand with them. Both countries are assuming greater responsibility for their own security, which will help our troops return home as quickly as possible with the honor they have earned. I urge the House and Senate to reach a final agreement that focuses taxpayer dollars on providing the tools our troops and diplomats need now, so that I can sign a bill into law as soon as possible.

Memorandum on Effective Dates of Provisions in Title I of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004

April 21, 2005

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Effective Dates of Provisions in Title I of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004

Subsection 1097(a) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108–458, December 17, 2004) (the Act) provides:

> (a) IN GENERAL—Except as otherwise expressly provided in this Act, this title and the amendments made by this title shall take effect not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subsection 1097(a) clearly contemplates that one or more of the provisions in Title I of the Act may take effect earlier than the date that is 6 months after the date of enactment of the Act, but does not state explicitly the mechanism for determining when such earlier effect shall occur, leaving it to the President in the execution of the Act. Moreover, given that section 1097(a) evinces a legislative intent to afford the President flexibility, and such flexibility is constitutionally appropriate with respect to intelligence matters (see *United States v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corporation*, 299 U.S. 304 (1936)), the executive branch shall construe section 1097(a) to authorize the President to select different effective dates that precede the 6-month deadline for different provisions in Title I.

Therefore, pursuant to the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America,

including subsection 1097(a) of the Act, I hereby determine and direct:

1. Sections 1097(a) and 1103 of the Act, relating respectively to effective dates of provisions and to severability, shall take effect immediately upon the signing of this memorandum to any extent that they have not already taken effect.
2. Provisions in Title I of the Act other than those addressed in numbered paragraph 1 of this memorandum shall take effect immediately upon the signing of this memorandum, except:

(a) any provision in Title I of the Act for which the Act expressly provides the date on which the provision shall take effect; and

(b) sections 1021 and 1092 of the Act, relating to the National Counterterrorism Center.

The taking of effect of a provision pursuant to section 1097(a) of the Act and this memorandum shall not affect the construction of such provision by the executive branch as set forth in my Statement of December 17, 2004, upon signing the Act into law.

The Director of the Office of Management and Budget is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Memorandum on Assignment of Reporting Functions Under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004

April 21, 2005

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Assignment of Reporting Functions under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code:

(1) The reporting functions of the President under sections 4026(a)(4)(A), 4026(c)(2), 7104(e)(4)(A), 7202(d), 7204(c)(1)–(2), and 7119(a) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (Public Law 108–458, 118 Stat. 3638) (the "Act") are hereby assigned to the Secretary of State.

The reporting function under section 7202(d) of the Act on the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center shall be coordinated with the Attorney General and the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Heads of departments and agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, furnish to the Secretary of State information the Secretary requests to perform such functions, in the format and on the schedule specified by the Secretary.

(2) The reporting function of the President under section 7104(i) of the Act is hereby assigned to the Secretary of Defense.

Heads of departments and agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, furnish to the Secretary of Defense information the Secretary requests to perform such functions, in the format and on the schedule specified by the Secretary.

(3) The reporting functions under sections 1022 and 1094 of the Act are hereby assigned to the Director of National Intelligence.

Heads of departments and agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, furnish to the Director of National Intelligence information the Director requests to perform such functions, in the format and on the schedule specified by the Director.

The Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Director of National Intelligence shall perform such functions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure

of which could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

Any reference in this memorandum to the provision of any Act shall be deemed to include references to any hereafter-enacted provision of law that is the same or substantially the same as such provision.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Remarks on the Nomination of General Peter Pace To Be Chairman and Admiral Edmund P. Giambastiani, Jr., To Be Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

April 22, 2005

The President. Good morning. As President, my most solemn duty is protecting the American people. In meeting this responsibility, one of the most important decisions I make is the appointment of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Today I'm pleased to announce my decision to nominate General Peter Pace to take on this vital job.

When confirmed by the Senate, General Pete Pace will be the first marine in history to hold this vital position. He knows the job well. For the past 3½ years, he has served under our superb Secretary of Defense, Don Rumsfeld. He has been the Deputy to one of the most outstanding Chairmen our Nation has ever had, General Richard Myers.

As my most senior military adviser, General Myers has helped prepare military forces so they can meet the threats of this new century. This is a huge task, even in peacetime. Dick Myers did it while defending America from one of the most determined and vicious enemies we have ever faced. On General Myers' watch, we toppled two brutal dictatorships in Afghanistan and Iraq and liberated more than 50 million people. By removing the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, we have made America safer and put a troubled region on the path to freedom and peace.

I want to thank General Dick Myers for his able service over four decades and his tireless dedication to duty and country. And I also thank his wife, Mary Jo. Dick Myers has had four jobs with four stars, but the distinction that he is proudest of is not a military one. Last year, the National Father's Day Council named him Father of the Year.

I'm confident that the great work that General Dick Myers set in motion at the Pentagon will continue under the leadership of General Pete Pace. The first thing America needs to know about Pete Pace is that he is a marine. To the American people, marine is shorthand for "can do." And I'm counting on Pete Pace to bring the Marine spirit to these new responsibilities.

General Pete Pace's life is the story of the American Dream. His father was an immigrant from Italy. Pete Pace was born in Brooklyn. He grew up in New Jersey, and he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy. He was a rifle platoon leader in Vietnam. He commanded marines in Somalia, and he went on to command U.S. Marine forces in the Atlantic and became the head of the U.S. Southern Command. It tells you something about Pete Pace's devotion to his troops that under the glass on his desk at the Pentagon, he keeps a photo of Lance Corporal Guido Farinaro. He was the first marine he lost in combat in Vietnam.

I've come to rely on Pete Pace's wisdom, judgment, and sense of humor. I will continue to rely on those qualities as he serves our Nation as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We'll need his wisdom and determination as we continue to transform our Armed Forces so we can defeat today's enemies while preparing ourselves for military challenges we will face as this new century unfolds.

General Pete Pace also understands the critical role military families play in the success of our Armed Forces. That's because he has a great military family, himself. I'm pleased to welcome his wife, Lynne, and daughter, Tiffany, who have joined us today. They're proud of Pete, and they should be.

Because he has served in the job, General Pete Pace also understands the important role that the Vice Chairman plays. Today I

am pleased to announce that I have nominated an outstanding military officer, Admiral Ed Giambastiani. [*Laughter*] He shall be known as Admiral G. [*Laughter*] Anyway, he's going to be the Vice Chairman. [*Laughter*]

For the past 2½ years, Admiral G., as his friends and now the President calls him—[*laughter*]—has been serving our Nation while wearing two important hats. As Commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, he has been transforming our Armed Forces so they can better work together to defeat the threats of the 21st century. As the first Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation, he's been leading the effort to bring reform to NATO military so our Alliance is prepared for the threats of tomorrow.

Admiral G. is joined today by his wife, Cindy, daughter, Cathy, and his son, Pete, a Navy lieutenant, and Pete's wife, Jennifer.

I appreciate the willingness of these men and their families to take on these new assignments in an extraordinary moment in our Nation's history. We still face ruthless adversaries who wish to attack our country. With the leadership of men like these, the outcome of the struggle is assured: America will defeat freedom's enemies and ensure the security of our country for generations to come.

It's my honor to bring to the podium General Pete Pace.

[*At this point, Chairman-Designate Pace made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thanks for bailing me out. [*Laughter*]

[*Chairman-Designate Pace continued his remarks, and then Vice Chairman-Designate Giambastiani made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chairman-Designate Pace and Vice Chairman-Designate Giambastiani.

Remarks on Earth Day in Knoxville, Tennessee

April 22, 2005

It's great to be back in the State of Tennessee—I'm sorry we're not at the Great Smoky National Park. Senator Lamar Alexander has been urging me to come to the park and see the great beauty of a part of the world where he was raised. I'm proud to be traveling with Senator Bill Frist, the great majority leader of the United States Senate from the State of Tennessee, and Lamar Alexander. The thing about old Lamar is he's constantly reminding me that without Tennessee, Texas wouldn't be much. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate traveling with Congressman Jimmy Duncan, the Congressman from this district. I remember all too well going to the Duncan family picnic that he gave. Evidently, he's got a pretty good-sized family, since there was about 15,000 people there. [*Laughter*] I'm proud to be with Bill Jenkins, from east Tennessee, and Zach Wamp, Congressman Wamp. We had a good visit on the airplane, talking about issues that are important to Tennessee and our country. It's an honor to work with these fine leaders as we work to protect our country and secure our country and enhance the prosperity of our country.

I'm traveling as well with the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton—one of her jobs is to oversee the national parks of our country—as well as Acting Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Steve Johnson. I picked Steve to head the EPA. I did so because, like me and like the folks serving in Congress here, we care about our environment. He also comes from the ranks of the EPA. He knows the Agency. He knows how to work with local folks to get things done. And I urge the Senate to confirm him as quickly as possible.

Before I begin, it was an honor to meet Pat Summitt, basketball coach of the Lady Vols. I told her I was heading down to Crawford, which is right next door to Baylor. And she said, "Well, make sure you say hello to one of my pupils," a person she coached, Kim Mulkey-Roberts. So I'm going to do that. If you're watching TV, Kim, Pat sends

her best. What an honorable woman Pat Summitt is, and what a great role model she is for those of us who aspire to leadership.

In the park, had I been there, I would have reminded people today is Earth Day, a day in which we recommit ourselves to being good stewards of our land. We didn't create this Earth, but we have an obligation to protect it. One of the interesting things about our Nation is that since 1970, the air is cleaner, and the water is more pure, and we're using our land better, and our economy has grown a lot. My point is, it's possible to have economic growth and jobs and opportunity and, at the same time, be wise stewards of the land.

I remember traveling with Lamar down here one time, and he said, "I want you to understand, and I want you to pay attention to the ozone levels in the Smokies." And so I did a little research, and I'm proud to report, since 2000, the ozone levels have dropped. But there is more to be done to make sure the Smoky Mountains and the Smoky Mountain National Park is as beautiful as possible.

And I want to share with you too, two issues that we have worked together on that will make a difference not only to the folks here in Tennessee but around the country. First, we have finalized a rule that will cut pollution from heavy diesel engines by 90 percent. We worked with the manufacturers of those engines, and we've come up with a way to reduce pollution from diesel engines, and that's going to help a lot.

And secondly, I put forth a rule—a series of rules called the Clear Skies Initiative, which will cut air pollution from coal-fired powerplants by 70 percent. This is a commonsense approach to dealing with this important issue. We use a market-based system, a cap and trade system to provide flexibility so that the powerplants can meet the goals we set of reducing pollution by 70 percent. The initiatives we did through Executive order are important, but it would sure be helpful if Congress passed the Clear Skies legislation as well.

The water quality of the United States is good because we're strictly enforcing the law. Ninety percent of the United States have water that meets very stringent health standards. That's up, by the way, from about 74 percent. And we'll continue to work hard to make sure everybody has got good water.

One of the initiatives I announced on Earth Day last year was to restore, improve, and protect 3 million acres of wetlands over a 5-year period of time. The policy used to be no net loss. I thought we needed to be more aggressive on wetlands. And so the new goal is to restore, improve, or protect 3 million acres of land. This year we enhanced 830,000 acres, so we're on our way to meeting that goal, and that's good for the country.

The farm bill is working, and I appreciate the Members behind me who understand the importance of the Conservation Reserve Program, which helps our ranchers and farmers restore grasslands and build valuable habitat for wildlife.

I was concerned about forest fires that have decimated a lot of our national treasures, so I worked with the Congress to pass the Healthy Forest Restoration Act. I want to thank Senator Frist for working that piece of legislation through the Senate. Last year, as a result of that bill, we removed hazardous fuels in forested areas—over 10 million acres. It's really an important piece of legislation, to be wise about how we conserve our national forests.

We're making good progress when it comes to restoring industrial sites through the brownfields initiative. We've restored 1,200 abandoned industrial sites since I've been the President and converted them to productive use.

One of my concerns back when I first started running for President was to make sure that our National Park System worked well for all our citizens. The parks belong to the people, and the parks should be accessible to the people. A lot of good folks use our parks, but as a result of not paying close attention to the maintenance backlogs in our parks, some of the parks weren't meeting the standards that we should expect. And so I laid out a 5-year initiative to spend $4.9 billion to end the maintenance backlog of our parks. We'll meet that initiative when Congress meets my budget request this year. I want to thank Senator Frist, Senator Alexander, and the Members of the Congress for supporting this important park initiative.

We spent $20 million last year in the Smokies on maintenance backlog. In other words, we have an obligation to maintain these valuable assets on behalf of the people, and we're meeting that obligation. Secretary Gale Norton and Fran Mainella, who runs our park system, are doing a fine job of setting clear priorities and explaining to Congress the nature of those priorities and then restoring these parks back to where they need to be so people can use them.

I wish I had been there at the park to thank the park rangers who work so hard to make sure our parks are accessible to our citizens. The rangers are a fabulous group of people, whether they be here in Tennessee or around the Nation, and they work hard on behalf of the citizens of our country. But one of the things that makes our park system work well is the fact that there are a lot of volunteers all across America who want to work in the parks. I don't know if you realize this in this part of the world, but there are 2,000 volunteers who work in the Smokies. Doesn't surprise me; after all, this is the Volunteer State.

If you're interested in serving, if conservation interests you, if you want to be a part of our national effort to be good stewards of the environment, you ought to go on to the usafreedomcorps.gov web site. It's a web site we set up to encourage voluntarism in America. And if you volunteer to serve in a national park, to restore trails, for example, you'll find a lot of other good citizens right there with you.

So my message to the good folks of Tennessee on Earth Day is, we have a duty and an obligation to protect our environment. We're meeting that obligation, but that obligation is not just a Federal obligation. There is a State obligation, a local obligation, and each of us as citizens can do our part as well.

I appreciate you all coming out. I'm honored to be traveling with some fine members of the congressional delegation from Tennessee. May God continue to bless the good folks of Tennessee and our country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at the McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base. In his remarks, he referred to Pat Summitt, head coach, University of Tennessee's women's basketball team; and Kim Mulkey-Robertson, head coach, Baylor University's women's basketball team.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 16

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 17

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

April 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Columbia, SC, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Tracey Ely.

In the afternoon, the President met with employees and patrons at the Rockaway Athletic Club in Columbia.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, he participated in a television interview with Ron Insana of CNBC.

April 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Springfield, IL, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Della Amos.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with the chairs and

ranking members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Senate Finance Committee, and the House Committee on Ways and Means to discuss energy legislation.

The President declared a major disaster in New Jersey and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on April 1–3.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on April 2–4.

April 20

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then met with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld. Later, he had a briefing on the national economy.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with 2005 Teacher of the Year Jason Kamras.

April 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Cabinet Room, he met with Members of the House of Representatives to discuss Social Security reform.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a swearing-in ceremony for John D. Negroponte as Director of National Intelligence.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert B. Holland III to be the U.S. Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles E. Johnson to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Budget, Technology, and Finance.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roger Dwayne Pierce to be Ambassador to Cape Verde.

The President declared an emergency in Maine and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by record snow on March 11–12.

April 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base in Knoxville, TN, arriving in the afternoon. Upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Bob Lochbaum.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to the Inaugural Mass of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on April 24: Jeb Bush (head of delegation); Michael S. Steele; Carl A. Anderson; Helen Alvare; and Frank Hanley.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted April 19

Alex Azar II,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Claude A. Allen, resigned.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released April 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on Madagascar signing the first Compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation Board

Announcement of appointment of Executive Secretary of the National Security Council

Released April 19

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing the annual U.S.-EU Summit

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Jersey

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Released April 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 256

Fact sheet: Securing Our Nation's Energy Future

Released April 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Maine

Released April 22

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Dana Perino and White House Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James Connaughton

Announcement of nomination for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Announcement of nomination for Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Fact sheet: Encouraging Volunteerism and Environmental Conservation

Acts Approved by the President

Approved April 20

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